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Books by John Hall Wheelock

POEMS OLD AND NEW

POEMS, 1911-1936

THE BRIGHT DOOM

THE BLACK PANTHER

DUST AND LIGHT

LOVE AND LIBERATION

THE BELOVED ADVENTURE

THE HUMAN FANTASY

Edited by, with Introduction

POETS OF TODAY III

POETS OF TODAY II

POETS OF TODAY I

EDITOR TO AUTHOR: THE LETTERS OF MAXWELL E. PERKINS

THE FACE OF A NATION: POETICAL PASSAGES FROM THE
WRITINGS OF THOMAS WOLFE



POEMS
OLD AND NEW



POEMS
OLD AND NEW

BY JOHN HALL WHEELOCK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

New York

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Auch der andre, der bist du.

—ROSEGGER

*Hélas! quand je vous parle de moi, je vous
parle de vous. Comment ne le sentez-vous pas?*

—HUGO



TO PHYLLIS



PREFACE

Of the poems brought together in this collection, more than forty—the entire contents of Parts VIII and IX—are new. They were written in recent years, and have not previously been published in book form. The other ninety-odd poems included have been selected from my seven books. The collection, as a whole, covers a considerable period of time: one or two of the poems were published in 1905, during my freshman year at college; several were not written until the autumn of 1955. The arrangement throughout is, for the most part, chronological.

I should like to add that I am aware of the liberties I have taken with the traditional Babylonian legend in my "The Descent of Queen Istar into Hades"—influenced, perhaps, by Vincent d'Indy's beautiful and moving composition on that theme. I hope I may be forgiven for daring to interpret, from a new angle, this ancient and symbolic myth.

Finally, in explanation, the title of one of the later poems, "Bonac," is the name affectionately given by the local residents, or "Bonackers," to the eastern end of Long Island—a region including, among other places, Montauk, Amagansett, and East Hampton where I have spent, in the family home there, some part of almost every summer as far back as I can remember. "Bonac" does not, as one might suppose, derive from the French "bon acre," but is—or so tradition has it—of North American Indian origin.

J. H. W.



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I

*I lift my voice in the wind of morning
For the joy within me that knows no bounds,
I echo back the vibrant beauty
With which heaven's hollow lute resounds.*

*I shed my song on the feet of all men,
On the feet of all shed out like wine—
On the whole and the hurt I shed my bounty,
The beauty within me that is not mine.*

*Turn not away from my song, nor scorn me,
Who bear the secret that holds the sky
And the stars together, but know within me
There speaks another more wise than I.*

*Nor spurn me here from your heart, to hate me—
Yet hate me here if you will, not so
Myself you hate but the love within me
That loves you, whether you would or no.*

*Here love returns with love to the lover,
And beauty unto the heart thereof,
And hatred unto the heart of the hater,
Whether he would or no, with love.*

SONGS

I

Your body's motion is like music—
Your stride, ecstatic and light,
Moves to the rhythm of hushed music,
The unheard music of delight.

The silent splendor of the Creation
Speaks through your body's stately strength,
And the lithe harmony of beauty
Undulates through its lovely length—

And rhythmically your bosom's arches,
Alternately, with every breath,
Lift lifeward in long lines of beauty,
And lapse along the slopes of death.

II

Lift your arms to the stars
And give an immortal shout!
Not all the wells of darkness
Can put your beauty out.

You are armed with love, with love,
Nor all the powers of fate
Avail to do you harm—
Nor all the hands of hate.

What of good and evil,
Hell, and Heaven above—
Trample them with love!
Ride over them with love!

III

O belovèd, when I heard it
From your lips, my very name
First, how like a song it sounded—
Still the same, yet not the same!

To that word another meaning
Then was given, and a joy,
All tongues after yours repeating
Never wholly may destroy.

IV

All my love for my sweet
I bared, one day, to her—
Carelessly she took it,
And like a conqueror.

She bowed the neck of my soul
To fit it to her yoke,
She bridled the lips of song—
Fear within me awoke.

But love cried, "Swiftly, swiftly
Bear her along the road:
Beautiful is the goal,
And beauty is the goad."

V

Bury me east or west, when you come I will rise to greet
 you;
 I will rise to greet you with love if you come where I lie
 in the south;
 If you come to my grave in the north, with love I will rise
 to greet you—
 And a song on my mouth.

VI

Almost against your heart
 My beating heart has grown,
 Hardly your very self
 Is separate from my own.

Yet, virgin as the morning,
 Unconquerable and free,
 And strange as at the first meeting,
 Ever you come to me.

Oh, the lure of you, the secret,
 Fairer a thousandfold—
 Like the stars, is ever new,
 Like the stars, is ever old.

VII

Life burns us up like fire,
 And song goes up in flame;
 The body returns in ashes
 To the ashes whence it came.

Out of things it rises,
And laughs, and loves, and sings;
Slowly it subsides
Into the char of things.

Yet a voice soars above it—
Love is great and strong:
The best of us forever
Escapes, in love and song.

VIII

I roamed, in the gray evening, over field and hill—
Above me the pale clouds were restless wanderers;
And when the day was gone and all the fields were still,
The thought of you, deep in my heart, was like a thousand
stars.

IX

Fear not the Powers below,
Fear not the Powers above,
Nor death, nor fate, nor hate—
More terrible is love.

Though you fly before the morning
Till the east become the west,
You shall meet him, mouth to mouth—
You shall meet him, breast to breast.

All Heaven's heads bow down,
And all the throats of Hell
Cry up to him; his face
Is holy and terrible.

X

Swift morning awakes,
Dawn breaks her bars,
God's breath through the stars
Flickers and shakes.

Again to the sky
Leaps the day with delight,
Again turns the night
To his bosom to die.

With fierce passion they move,
With the rapture of pain,
Re-arisen again
From the fountains of love.

Oh, and I with the rest,
I, tireless, too—
I, unto you,
I, to your breast.

XI

Sunrise cries out to Day, and Morning murmurs to Noon,
"Oh, to be wearied out at the beloved lips!"
"Blessèd from her is the pain, and the weariness from her
Dearer than all glad things," Twilight whispers to Night.

XII

I am filled, I am filled,
I am filled full of you,
As the meadows with light,
As the morning with dew.

Mine alone, of all born,
Is elected the breast
To be bearer of you
To the east and the west.

For joy all the day,
For joy all the night,
My love cries aloud,
I laugh for delight.

The beautiful burden
At heart, I go forth,
Drunken with song,
To the south and the north.

O all men and women
And angels, draw near—
Look in my heart!
Look what is here!

XIII

The air is full of dawn and spring—
Outside the room I see
A swallow, like a shaft of light,
Shift sideways suddenly.

There is no place for death at all
In earth or heaven above—
He never yet believed in death
Who ever learned to love.

Build me a tomb when I am dead,
But leave a window free
That I may watch the swallow's flight,
And spring come back to me.

Build me a tomb of steel and stone,
But leave one window free,
That I may feel the spring come back
And you come back to me.

XIV

What you have given me
Night, nor day,
Nor death, nor time
Can take away.

O most adored,
O my delight,
The day shall hear me,
And the night!

I will make this joy
Upon my lips
Your trumpet
To the Doom's eclipse.

II

CORPUS EST DE DEO

Lo, say the wise, say the very wise—
“Only the soul is of God,” say they,
“She shall not perish or pass away,
But the flesh dies, but the fair flesh dies.”
Corpus est de Deo.

This is the time, this is the brave time,
How that Lord Christ was risen from death,
All we shall sing, all we that have breath,
In a glad rhyme, in a joyous rhyme.
Corpus est de Deo.

One Joseph said, and good Joseph said,
“That I might bear the body away
And the pale body in sepulchre lay,
And the heavy head, the heavy head!”
Corpus est de Deo.

And to his place, to his secret place,
Lo—One was carried in death-sleep,
With huddling steps when the night was deep,
With slow pace, and with slow pace.
Corpus est de Deo.

With myrrh and spice, with fresh myrrh and spice
And linen white, the white body they bound—
This saw, from a more removed ground,
Mary's eyes and the Magdalen's eyes.
Corpus est de Deo.

With spices sweet, with fresh spices sweet,
In tomb they laid the body away;
"Oh, piteous Lord, Master," cried they—
And, "The wounded feet, oh, the wounded feet!"
Corpus est de Deo.

With their own hands, with their own sad hands,
They closed the door with a massy stone,
There none remained but the watch alone—
On His wrists, bands; on His feet, grave-bands.
Corpus est de Deo.

Silence around, deep silence around:
There was none wept with a covered face,
There was none mourning about the place,
With a low sound, with a sad, low sound.
Corpus est de Deo.

Master, arise! Good Master, arise!
Nay, for a little, a sleep is sweet—
Desire there was not in His feet,
And in His eyes no light for His eyes.
Corpus est de Deo.

With sound of might, with sound of great might,
The white grave-clothes were rent asunder,
With a terribleness and wonder,
And a great light and fire of light.
Corpus est de Deo.

Be very glad, be exceeding glad—
Exult, cry out, for your great gladness!
His spirit sprang from the night and sadness,
And was not sad—no, and was not sad.
Corpus est de Deo.

Put by your shame, put by your vain shame,
Loose your lips and your heart in song!
Out of the darkness that is most strong
His body came, His fair body came.
Corpus est de Deo.

Lo, say the wise, say the very wise,
“Soul is of God, the body a vain thing.”
Dance with your feet, let your mouth sing!
Lift up your eyes, lift up your sad eyes!
Corpus est de Deo.

In every place say they, in each place,
“Soul is of God; the body of shame.”
Out of the dust His sweet body came,
And blood to His face, to His sweet face.
Corpus est de Deo.

Oh, wondrous thing—oh, most blessed thing:
Body and soul of one great birth!
All ye that are of dust and earth,
Lift up and sing, lift ye up and sing,
“*Corpus est de Deo.*”

AN OLD SONG

My sister, my spouse, is as a secret spring,
A fountain of light under the brows of the morn,
A garden of quiet rest;
Under her side the melancholy sorrowing
Of ancient sadness is, and under her breast
The joy of the unborn.

My flower, my love, is as a shining star,
As a young rose hid in the windy grass,
A song in the land of death—
The mournful beauty of all brief things that are,
A passionate and unavailing breath,
A soft "alas."

My sister, my dove, is as a bundle of myrrh,
A house of delights, a garden of pleasant length,
A shady and pleasant tree;
Her breast is the mansion of certain dreams that were,
And her pale breast a promise of things to be,
A sorrowful strength.

As a cool wood is my own, my sister, my dove,
A giver of life, a gate to the land of breath,
A stooping and shady cloud—
As a sad secret bared for the eyes of love,
A futile defiance, sorrowful and proud,
Of ancient death.

IT IS FINISHED

There was a trampling of horses from Calvary,
Where the armed Romans rode from the mountainside;
Yet, riding, they dreamed of the soul that could rise free
Out of the bruised breast and the arms nailed wide.

There was a trampling of horses from Calvary,
And the long spears glittered into the night;
Yet, riding, they dreamed of the will that dared to be
When the head bowed and the heavens were rent with
light.

The eyelids that closed over sleep like folded wings,
And the proud mouth that kissed death with the cry
"Father, forgive them"—silently these things
They remembered, riding down from Calvary.

And Joseph, when the sick body was lowered slowly,
Folded it in a white cloth without seam—
The indomitable brow, inflexible and holy,
And the sad breast that held the immortal dream,

And the feet that could not walk, and the piercèd hand,
And the arms that held the whole world in their embrace.
But Mary, beside the cross-tree, could not understand,
Looking upon the tired, human face.

THE WAVE

As the still moon without stir
Draws the waters after her,
The sad robe of all the sea,
Silently thou drawest me.

As the billows on the shore,
To be broken and give o'er,
Dash themselves in dying spray,
So I perish, even as they.

Lethe soft, ah, sweet surcease—
Not the wave may be at peace
Till it shatter, nor love rest
Save at the belovèd breast.

LANCELOT TO GUINEVERE

Now all the east is tired of the twilight,
And the world's borders blossom like a rose,
And the world's tapers tremble and grow dim;
Under the cloud-line, under the gray twilight,
Under the pale, cold arch of heaven's rim,
The low, white fire of the morning glows,

And a clear wind is wandering in the meadows—
O queenly heart, never again, again,
Shall this thing be, or this sweet wonder be!
I take my way through the unending meadows,
Through the long fields beside the sunless sea
I take my way, I pass from your domain.

The spirit's fire, more fiery than the morning,
The inner flame, followed through night and day,
Burns to a purer light the old blind love;
Under the infinite arches of the morning
I move with a new gladness—high above,
The last stars fade, and I am far away.

I have found one thing more fair than the old heaven,
More sweet than all sad things to think upon—
Yes, and more sweet than your two folded hands.
Sleep, and forget: the opening gates of heaven
Flood with a sudden pain the empty lands,
And the old wonder wakes—but I am gone.

THE LOST LAND

Tumult is in the west, and wild voices calling—
The old barbaric voices calling that will not rest;
Therefore my heart is glad, I am strong, I shout with the
west,
And follow with tears and laughter where the leaves
are falling.

The lean cattle roam where the wind bows down the grass,
The swallows leap on the air, and shift, and follow, and
stray
Over the long dunes to the land of the heart far away,
Calling—and in my veins a voice cries out where they
pass.

I remember the house, the sorrow long ago
In the first widening dawn of the world, the quiet face
Lost ere the first sea sang, or the wind—the lonely place,
Beyond the white-capped sea, where the waves and waters
go.

I will laugh on the hills, shout as the days depart:
Death cannot quench this spirit, or stay me with his hand;
I shall spring from the dust again toward the long-lost
land,
As the lithe swallow springs when autumn cries in the
heart.

Beyond the long, gray clouds the winds walk in the west;
The lean cattle pause, with strained-out throats, and stray,
Where the swallows leap on the air, and shift, and follow
away,
Calling, calling. Oh, the voices will leave no rest.

I will laugh on the hills, gird myself up for my race:
Ah, you are very fair, you are strong, but O earth, O my
mother,
The cry, deep in the heart, not all the years can smother—
The old, strange pang, the voices, the lost place!

SONG AT TWILIGHT

Close to the highest, loneliest face of heaven
The flaming candles of the stars are pressed;
Now you are tired because the day is done—
And twilight heaves more gently in your breast
Grown weary of the sun.

The eyelids of the world droop full and drowsy,
But the unwearied eyes shine far above her;
The tumult and the ancient struggles cease—
The wars that beauty wages on her lover
Dwindle into a peace.

The helplessness of sleep fills me with pity
Even more than death—more lovable, more dear.
What care have you for all things past and done,
Mournful or glad! In the hushed twilight here
They vanish, and are gone.

All passionate things and all things great and joyous,
Even they, too, must tire and fade away;
Even the heart grows tired and cannot weep,
But, leaning on the ebbcd and fallen day,
Sleeps—and is glad of sleep.

For in the end all things are grave and holy,
And Love, whose thought was laughter and no other,
Above her lips, with songs and kisses glad,
Shine out the eyes of the undaunted mother,
Prophetical and sad.

SUMMER'S END

The last, late swallow is fled,
And all the hope of the heart—
The summer is over and dead.

Forever and ever to part!
The summer is over and dead,
But what of the hopeless heart?

Come, for the swallow is fled—
Come away, silent heart,
Silent with dreams that are dead.

Come, for you cannot stay,
Nursing your restless heart
All in the dusk of the day.

Come, for when all has been said,
What is there more to say!
The summer is over and dead.

The last, late swallow is fled
Silent into the south—
But oh, the curve of her throat!
The sound of her voice—
The kisses of her mouth!

The summer is over and dead.

SERENADE

The stars are out, and the heavens are silent and very deep,
My heart was wakeful and wild, and hungry to be with the
stars,
I rose and came to thy window—but thou, my beloved,
sleep!

Sleep, though my heart be wild and wakeful and full of
unrest:
The crickets are still, and the breezes creep in at thy
window, sweet—
Thy right arm is under thy head, and thy left lies over thy
breast.

Sleep till the wind be dead and the stars swoon out of the
skies,
The world is full of laughter and weeping and passionate
prayer;
More soft than the night on the waters are thine eyelids
over thine eyes.

I lay in my chamber dreaming, but my heart would leave
me no rest;
I thought, When the morrow dawns I shall not see her
again—
And my heart grew loud in my veins, my heart grew strong
in my breast.

I said, I will rise and go and sing to her in the night;
She will wake from her sleep and come, and come to me
 where I sing,
And come to my arms where I stand, alone, in the pale
 starlight.

But sleep—it is better, belovèd, than vexing thee with my
 cries,
The world is full of laughter and weeping and passionate
 prayer;
More soft than the night on the waters are thine eyelids
 over thine eyes.

Old dreams, old loves, old desires, and all the old
 wonderings
Of the piteous bygone loves, wail round at thy window,
 sweet;
But thou art weary, belovèd—yes, weary of all these
 things,

Weary of all these things, and fain of slumber and rest,
Fain of slumber and darkness, the far-off sound of the sea:
Thy right arm is under thy head, and thy left lies over
 thy breast.

Sleep till the wind be dead and the stars swoon out of the
 skies,
The world is full of laughter and weeping and passionate
 prayer;
More soft than the night on the waters are thine eyelids
 over thine eyes.

SEPTEMBER BY THE SEA

The melancholy mood of bleak September
Chills the forsaken beach here by the sea—
The gray pavilion stares out wearily,
The old, wrenched seats and railings half remember
Their summer gayety.

So desolate, so windy, so forsaken—
A certain homesickness blows on the air;
The flagless pole seems sorrowful and bare,
The wind pierces my breast enough to awaken
The memories sleeping there.

Beneath his touch the cold sea shines and shivers;
The fallen arbor under which I sit
Sheds all its wrinkled leafage bit by bit—
Through every leaf his breath rustles and quivers,
Shaking and stirring it,

And dips upon the ruffled waters, foaming.
In the wide pallor of the waning day
The sand lies bare—they are all gone away
But one old woman in a blue shawl roaming
The beach windy and gray.

No other life there is, no other motion,
Only the lonely wind blows on and on,
Only in a half-dream I dream upon
The eyes of one I loved, here by the ocean,
How many autumns gone,

Here by these buildings, by these rolling beaches;
The ghosts of many garish summer days
Seem now to haunt them, from the westward blaze
Of the low sun a red beam slants, and reaches
The windows with its rays,

Giving them a dull light through the barred shutters.
The bathing-ropes drift on the waves that stir,
Where the gay crowds of laughing bathers were.
The beach, listening to a tent-flap that flutters,
Grows dark and drearier.

They are all gone, they will return—ah, never—
Summer and joy and the wild love of you!
The old woman there gathers her shawl of blue
About her, as if she were going away forever,
And I am going, too.

SONG

When in the moment of your greatest joy
Your heart is drunken, and immense and free
Reaches before you the wide heaven of joy,
Remember me.

When your heart fails you and you cannot bear
The thought of all the little days to be—
When in the evening you are very tired,
Remember me.

Oh, in the bridal chamber, in his arms,
When your breast heaves with music like the sea—
When all the world is banished and forgot,
Remember me.

When on your death-bed you shall lie, and all
Your memory ebbs to the great Memory—
When on some other breast you lean at last,
Ah then, remember me.

THE DESCENT OF QUEEN ISTAR INTO HADES

(Istar, sick of an unrequited love, and mad with jealousy, seeks surcease in the abode of Allat, the realm of the god Irkhalia, the Land of Death.)

Toward the mute, toward the inexorable land,
Istar, daughter of Sin,* inclined her head,
Also, her steps toward the silence directed she;
Toward the mute, toward the arid land,
Toward the region where there is no sea,
Toward the country where the stars are dead,
She stretched forth her hand.

Ere it was finished and done—
The word of Queen Istar, and even her fierce word:
"The houses of darkness stand open, I haste, I fly;
In triumph to the dust I am gone,
Yes, even with laughter, with a cry—
I spread my arms as a bird,
I hasten, I run,

"Toward the darkness, toward the dread death,
Toward the place whose silence is over them that were
 quick,
Toward the land where the sun and the moon shed no
 beam,
Where sleep has no murmuring breath;
For lo, I am sick of a dream,
I loathe it—oh, I am sick!
I hunger for death.

* The Babylonian moon-god, father of Istar.

"I burn, I am maddened, I go,
Neither any more do I cry, my wailing is still:
Let the winds of the dawn sing together that I may dance!
That I may enter and go
Let the gates of the darkness advance,
Let the gates make open, I will
And order it so.

"Draw back your bolts! Unbar!
Mine eyes are turned toward the place where there is no
sky,
My feet are set toward the land where the sun is dead,
A land without moon or star—
Make open, for I have said;
Open—for lo, it is I,"
Saith the Queen Istar.

At the first gate, when she was come,
The keeper struck off her crown, the sign of her head,
Also, her high tiara he struck with his hand:
"Enter, O lady, and come,
Of Allat it is the command—
To the place where the stars are dead
Enter and come."

At the second gate, at that gate
To the vaults of darkness, the palace of rain and rust,
The rings from her ears, her ear-rings, he made them free:
"Enter, O lady, the gate,
Of Allat it is the decree—
The gate that is covered with dust,
Lo, this is the gate."

At the third gate, and at the third,
The necklace binding her neck, the circlet about,
It broke at his hand, also it fell at his touch:
"Obey, O lady, the word,
The order of Allat is such
In the city that hears no shout,
Where no laughter is heard."

To the fourth gate when she had pressed,
The cincture of her breast, the breast-band over her breast,
The ornaments thereof, the jewels, at his touch they fell:
"Make bare, O lady, thy breast,
Of Allat it is the will
In the land where the winds have rest,
Where the waves have rest."

At the fifth gate, at the gate of rust,
The girdle of her waist, the gems of it, row on row,
In his hands he took them, he laid them across his knees:
"Enter the palace of dust,
The word of Allat decrees;
Go, for thou willest, go—
Nay, for thou must."

To the sixth gate when she was led,
Her armlets, her anklets, he struck from her body sweet:
"To the land whose chiefs are as birds, whose kings are
as birds,
Enter, O lady," he said—
"They are written of Allat the words,
'Let the night be a snare for her feet,
A shroud for her head.'"

At the seventh gate, when she was there,
The keeper tore from her body the covering veil—
As a blast of trumpets, sudden as when cymbals clash,
Her body, splendid and bare,
Dawned on the dark in a flash;
Her body, stately and pale,
Dawned suddenly there.

“Enter, O lady, at length,
The land of ruin, the country of trampled wheat”—
With a shifting sound of her sandals she beat the ground;
She burst through the portal at length,
She moved with a dancing sound,
With a shifting sound of her feet
And a sound of strength.

Istar lifted her hands,
She bit them, she beat her breast, she cried with a cry:
“O desolate lands whereof Istar hath entered the gate!
O dark and desolate lands!
Her body is choked with her hate,
With her hands she smites you—and I
With the hate of my hands.

“O desolate, dark and dark!
For the sake of love, and a vain love, for his sake
Do I seek you, the hunger of love makes hurried my
breath;
My body, starving and stark,
Yearns toward the fullness of death—
For his sake also, I make
My robes of the dark.

“Behold you—and lo—and lo,
Have I mourned at all, have I made any wail as I went!
As a trodden serpent, a gusty shower of chaff,
I turn to re-plague you so:
I dance to the horror, I laugh,
My neck with laughter is bent—
I go, I go!”

Toward the mute, toward the inexorable place,
Istar, daughter of Sin, inclined her head—
She wearied of a bitter love, she passed, she was gone;
In the sad, in the empty place,
With the darkness that is blind to the sun,
In the country where the stars are dead,
She covered her face.

I

GREETING

Beyond the topmost star of highest heaven
And murmurous motion of the wheeling spheres
I am enthroned at last above the years,
I am caught up beyond the shining Seven.

My song is ended and my singing done,
And I have put aside these earthly things;
My soul takes flight on unremembering wings
Beyond the fire of morning—risen and gone.

Now, as you read these verses from afar—
This very moment, from this woven rhyme,
I cry to you out of the wheels of Time,
I call to you across the morning-star.

II

THE NEW LOVE

In the silence, in the night,
When, at your window, the stars shine through—
Under the starlight, under the shining light,
Over the fallen dew,
I will come to you.

O love, O sweet,
Not with the seeking passion of yore,
Not with the eager eyes and the lips that meet,
Sundered forevermore—
Oh, not as before.

A deep, a new
Love that is pity fills me now;
Not with the old desire I turn to you—
Oh, I cannot tell you how.
Oh, I love you now.

Alas, alas,
Not with the seeking passion of yore,
Bending down in the night I will kiss you as I pass,
Once, and forevermore—
Oh, not as before.

III

DE COELO

Sleep on, I lie at heaven's high oriels,
Over the stars that murmur as they go,
Lighting your lattice-window far below—
And every star some of the glory spells
Whereof I know.

I have forgotten you, long, long ago,
Like the sweet, silver singing of thin bells
Ended, or music fading faint and low.
Sleep on, I lie at heaven's high oriels,
Who loved you so.

III



PORTRAIT

I see you stand before me,
Bizarre, absurd, enchanting,
(The swinging silver satchel,
The dear, ridiculous dress),

A little dauntless figure,
Half lost in the enormous
Gay picture-hat tipped forward
Across the eager face.

Its single feather trembles
Against the dusk. Beyond you,
The squalid, huddled city,
With many a flaring lamp,

Looms sinister and haunting,
—The waste that bred and bore you—
A mockery heartbreaking,
A menace and a joke.

But you stand all unknowing,
Glad-hearted, well, and reckless,
Magnanimous and merry,
My lost one, O my youth!

SUNDAY EVENING IN THE COMMON

Look, on the topmost branches of the world
The blossoms of the myriad stars are thick;
Over the huddled rows of stone and brick
A few sad wisps of empty smoke are curled,
Like ghosts languid and sick.

One breathless moment now the city's moaning
Fades, and the endless streets seem vague and dim.
There is no sound around the whole world's rim,
Save in the distance a small band is droning
Some desolate old hymn.

Van Wyck, how often have we been together
When this same moment made all mysteries clear:
The infinite stars that brood above us here,
And the gray city in the soft June weather,
So tawdry and so dear.

NEW YORK: EAST SIDE

In the spring, on the pavements of the city,
The little children play marbles, and laugh and shout—
Their laughter is drowned by the city all about;
But they laugh back, regardless of the city,
And run, and dance, and shout.

In the sunlight fading from the alleys,
The ruddy face and the dark face are bowed
Over a few soiled marbles; a watching crowd
Circles them in the noisy, dusty alleys,
Where the close heads are bowed.

From the river in the distance flowing
The whistles murmur—the tired souls of men
Call to each other over the waters again;
Over the river in the sunlight flowing
Answer the souls of men.

When lamps on the sidewalks glimmer,
Along the roofs the sky still burns with day—
A little group watches them where they play;
And in the distance the long waters glimmer
With the receding day.

PORTRAIT II

A certain hint in her, of common sense,
A practicalness, of all illusion void,
Stripping all facts of a futile eloquence—
These were the traits his watchfulness enjoyed.

From struggles with the world of give-and-take,
A very sagacious, incredulous hardihood
Shone forth in her—the eyes were wide awake
And the lips gay, in many a reckless mood.

Swift moments of passion or tenderness, beguiled
Out of a seeming compassionless carelessness,
Showed her part woman, part the eager child,
But all glad courage and frank fearlessness:

Something half-animal, so strange and strong—
Like the wild-bird that, when her lover sings,
Takes with shrewd unconcern his ardent song,
And finds no sentiment in primal things.

CHANT

The amplitude of space comes down to your own door;
Equally with the stars, the common and the street
Are part of the great beauty that shines from shore to
shore:

The universe divine lies round us at our feet—
Tangible, made of dust, and holy to the core.

Not in some world beyond dwells wonder, nor above,
Nor throned among the spheres, nor set for days to be;
Over you and beneath, whether you rest or move,
Reaches the shining fact, the starry infinity—
And all the hell of hate and all the heaven of love.

Here between birth and death, here in this womb of
races,
Across the field of the world, from you to the farthest end,
Scattered abroad like flowers—the myriad, myriad faces,
The lives, fated to yours, of lover and of friend—
Have you no love to shout across the horizoned spaces!

Before your generation and you go hurrying by,
Have you no word for all, of pure and valorous breath!
Oh, how the common doom transfigures destiny!
In the brave thought of all who pass through life and
death,
Splendid it is to live and glorious to die.

THE MADMAN

You call me mad, and if I am
It was a god who made me so—
His fiery truth within my heart
Has burned its life out long ago.

You, comrade, laughing down the street,
And you, with wearier eyes, alas—
I have a message for you each,
I buttonhole you as you pass.

Oh, listen to me—let me speak!
This thing I know, and truly know:
Through love for one another, love,
We can be saved, and only so.

THE CLOSE OF MASS

The crowded candles fade and flare,
Where the slow priest with swaying tread
Moves, and the Sanctus echoes there,
And the hushed people bow the head:
Christ is the wine, the bread.

Through the long aisles and vaulted gloom
Groans the mute common heart of men,
Sullen and holy with its doom;
On pilaster and wall, again
A Christ is crowned of men.

The circlet and its thorny rim
His carven forehead clasp and span,
But they have cramped and humbled him
Into a god, who was a man—
The first since time began.

They have crowned him with a fire of light,
With all the heavens for his seat,
They have made him awesome in his might.
Where are the man's eyes, still and sweet—
Where are the tired feet!

The silence aches; but through the reeds
Of the organ, through choir and arches dim,
The echoing world grows loud, and pleads,
With rough, hard hands and thorny diadem—
"Where is my Christ, what have you done to him?"

ALL THESE OTHERS

Into the city and the air of morning
He stepped, and felt the wind upon his face—
Up through his being welled a sudden joy
Not all the fever, nor the weariness,
Nor his awakening sorrow could destroy.

The pallid clouds hung low on the horizon,
Cold in the first flame of the widening day—
Through shadowy alley and through brightening street
There came a breath of rivers and the sea,
The asphalt had warm odors, wet and sweet,

While shop on shop opened a garish window—
Gay hats and dresses, jewels, crockery—
The vendor wheeled his cart along the square.
Faces of men and women hurried past him,
Each with its secret and its separate care;

And the great city, wistful in the sunlight,
Shone with a pathos terrible and tender,
A tired joy too patient to be glad.
Something he felt touched the old human pageant
To a new beauty, lovable and sad.

The loneliness, the isolation vanished;
He knew his life at one with all these others,
Purged of its separate pain, healed of its scars—
One with the common joy and general sorrow
Of all the hearts that beat beneath the stars:

The world of men, so sordid, and so wilful,
With grandeurs brimmed, and many a greed obscene,
Carnal and careless, brave without a moan—
And saved forever, gloriously, not
Through fear of evil, but through love alone.

NEW YORK: WEST SIDE

Down the stone valley, carven steep and straight,
Into the clouds the streets of twilight run—
That blend in molten bars about the sun—
Into the sunset and the evening's gate,

Opening on westward heaven. The first few
Flames of her starry candles now are seen,
Beyond the gradual twilight's darkening screen
And the pierced clouds, deep in the cloudless blue.

The stately buildings loom along the way—
The somber and stone desert all around;
In the whole world there is one only sound,
A street piano, faint and far away,

'Mid the strange peace colossal and supreme,
Presumptuous, a lonely human voice,
Full of old tunes and ditties that rejoice
Half dolefully, and die. The houses dream.

EPILOGUE

Some years it is, dear angel of my youth,
Since first I lost you, half a life ago—
Dear angel, liberator of my youth
From the dim caves of dream in which I lay.

For from myself my very self you freed
To all I longed for, all I loved the most.
Hardy and gay—healing all sickliness,
Healing all dreams with the more lovely fact—
You came to me, and I knew you for my truth
That was to drench me in the bitter brine
And quickening wave of life. Even as swift,
You passed, like a flash of lightning in the spring.

Yet often now, along the city's ways,
By empty square or hubbub of huddled street—
Through all the sordid and sacred haunts of men—
There comes a moment: when, in the garish night,
Laughing and loitering, the crowd goes by;
When, in the noontide clamor and unrest,
The tireless flood of being, like a sea,
Superb with pitiless strength rolls on; or yet,
Along the deserted pavements, when at dusk
Only the huckster's cry is heard afar,
I feel your presence, breathless and passionate there,
Not without pathos, move as in days of old—
A flash of the sane humanity, strong and well,
Reaching around me—vigorous, tawdry, brave,
Full of unsubtle ardor, but oh, how dear!

Ah, then I listen, and hear as in a dream,
Amid the chords of the travail and pain and joy
Of all things human, a young, an undaunted voice—
With wanton exuberance and immortal lust
The music of life welling up strong and clear.

IV

EARTH

Grasshopper, your tiny song
And my poem alike belong
To the dark and silent earth,
From which all poetry has birth;
All we say and all we sing
Is but as the murmuring
Of that drowsy heart of hers
When from her deep dream she stirs:
If we sorrow, or rejoice,
You and I are but her voice.

Deftly does the dust express,
In mind, her hidden loveliness—
And, from her cool silence, stream
The cricket's cry and Dante's dream;
For the earth, that breeds the trees,
Breeds cities too, and symphonies,
Equally her beauty flows
Into a savior, or a rose—
Looks down in dream, and from above
Smiles at herself in Jesus' love;
Christ's love and Homer's art
Are but the workings of her heart,
Through Leonardo's hand she seeks
Herself, and through Beethoven speaks
In holy thunderings that sound
The awful message of the ground.

The serene and humble mold
Does in herself all selves enfold,

Kingdoms, destinies, and creeds,
Proud dreams, heroic deeds,
Science, that probes the firmament,
The high, inflexible intent
Of one, for many, sacrificed;
Plato's brain, the heart of Christ,
All love, all legend, and all lore
Are in the dust forevermore.

Even as the growing grass,
Up from the soil religions pass,
And the field that bears the rye
Bears parables and prophecy—
Out of the earth the poem grows,
Like the lily, or the rose;
And all man is, or yet may be,
Is but herself in agony
Toiling up the steep ascent
Toward the complete accomplishment
When all dust shall be—the whole
Universe—one conscious soul.

Ah, the quiet and cool sod
Bears in her breast the dream of God.

If you would know what earth is, scan
The intricate, proud heart of man,
Which is the earth articulate,
And learn how holy and how great,
How limitless, and how profound,
Is the nature of the ground—

How, without question or demur,
We may entrust ourselves to her
When we are wearied out and lay
Our bodies in the common clay.

For she is pity, she is love,
All wisdom, she, all thoughts that move
About her everlasting breast
Till she gathers them to rest—
All tenderness of all the ages,
Seraphic secrets of the sages,
Vision and hope of all the seers,
All prayer, all anguish, and all tears,
Are but the dust, that from her dream
Awakes, and knows herself supreme;
Are but earth, when she reveals
All that her secret heart conceals
Down in the dark and silent loam,
Which is ourselves, asleep, at home.

Yes, and this, my poem, too,
Is part of her as dust and dew—
Wherein herself she doth declare,
Through my lips, and say her prayer.

SUMMER DAWN

Here, in the quiet chamber where I lie,
Out of the hungry hollows of the night
There comes a sombre and an ancient cry—
Dawn flowers up along the windy sky
In quickening light.

Laughable sadness fills me silently:
In the lone hour of morning, whip-poor-will,
You are the wail of days that used to be,
The voice of my lost childhood calling me,
Beyond the hill.

BALLAD

I dreamed I passed a doorway
Where, for a sign of death,
White ribbons one was binding
About a flowery wreath.

What drew me so, I know not,
But drawing near, I said,
"Kind sir, and can you tell me
Who is it here lies dead?"

Said he, "Your most beloved
Died here this very day,
That had known twenty Aprils,
Had she but lived till May."

Astonished, I made answer,
"Good sir, how say you so!
Here have I no beloved,
This house I do not know."

Quoth he, "Who from forever
Was destined so to be
Here lies, your true beloved,
Whom you shall never see."

I dreamed I passed a doorway
Where, for a sign of death,
White ribbons one was binding
About a flowery wreath.

THE MOONLIGHT SONATA

*Glimmering meadows, miles around,
Drenched with dew and drowsy sound,
Drink the moonlight and the dream;
Veiled in mists the lowlands gleam—
Through wild ways and fragrant aisles
Of the country, miles on miles,
Drifting cloudlike without will—
And soft mist is on the hill.*

*Everywhere earth's sbrill delight
Shakes and shimmers through the night,
Silver tides of music flow
Round the world: the cricket's low
Harp, the starry ecstasy
Of the keen cicada's cry,
With "I love, I love, I love,"
To the clondless moon above
Lift the old, the endless song;
And the firefly among
The low boughs and heavy leaves
His hushed flight in silence weaves—
Deeper than the love they sing,
The unutterable thing,
The sheer pang wherewith he glows,
Burns his body as he goes.*

*Now earth draws the trembling veil
From her bosom cloudy-pale,
And the bridegroom of the night
Flows to her in solemn light—*

*Memories of the absent sun
Dreaming of his lovely one.*

*From that fiery embrace
Wearied out, with lifted face,
Tangled hair, and dewy eyes,
Drowsed and murmurous she lies,
In the bride-sleep, the deep bliss
After some exalted kiss.*

Fragrant is thy flowery hair,
O belovèd: everywhere,
Thy faint odour on the air,
From dread arches of thy grace
Wafted, what dark, secret place,
Curves of thy bright beauty, all
Lure me to wild love; the call
Of past lives is in my breast,
Intimations, dimly guessed,
Of seraphic, solemn things—
Mingled lips and murmurings,
On cool nights that gave me birth.
Yet, O mother, secret earth,
What stark mystery no less
Haunts the bosom that I press
Close against thy carelessness!

Where the tender poem of night,
In veiled music and moonlight,
Shimmering cries, and stars, and dreams,
Onward in soft rhythm streams—

With reluctant pulse and pause
To its timeless ending draws,
Mother, mother, yet I know
Of cool nights that whispered so
When I was not, long ago;
When thy beauty, murmuring low,
With abandon, like a bride,
Throws her glimmering veils aside,
This dread love I dare not say
Turns my trembling lips away—
Something deeper, something more
Than I ever guessed before,
A new homesickness at heart
Hungering for the home thou art:
As the rivers to the one
Sea with solemn longing run,
So my being to thy breast,
So my sorrow to thy rest.

Thou art mother, thou art bride,
By what dearer name beside
Must I name thee, must I call,
Who art dearer far than all?

On thy heart I lay my head—
Oh, what is it thou hast said!
Secret, beautiful and dread;
Lovely moment drawing near;
Thought, most terrible and dear,
Darling thought, and fearful, of
The dear fury of thy love

Even now that draws me down,
My faint body, to thine own—
Near and nearer yet, till I
Tangled in thy being lie—
Close, and close, for sheer excess
Wearied out with loveliness—
All this separate self, this me,
Soothed into the self of thee,
Rendered up in ecstasy!

Almost now thou seem'st to steal
From my breast the self, I feel
How my being everywhere,
As in dream, upon the air
Widens round me, till I grow
All I look on, overflow—
And into the life adored
All my very life is poured,
Through warm portals of thy heart
Hastening onward where thou art,
Who art all things: in the breeze
Stirring all the ruffled trees
To low whispers, how I pass
Through each tiny blade of grass,
Tremble in moonlight, and rise
Looking out of other eyes—
Mystery of mysteries!
Pang of self, and tragical
Birth into the enlightened All!
Oh, dark rapture—to flow, press,
Cease, into thy loveliness,

With exalted weariness
Render up myself, and be,
Selfless, the dear self of thee—
In divine oblivion
One with the belovèd one!

Where I press my burning face
Weeds and grasses interlace—
Sweetheart, are these dewy, soft
Tears for me, who must so oft
Perish of thee to be thine?
Deep I drink of you, divine
Elixir, bewildering wine.

*In the grass my head is bowed,
The vague moon is in a cloud—
Ah, I cannot understand,
But the wind is like a hand
On my forehead, in caress,
And the earth is tenderness,
While around her sleeplessly
Shrills the restless will-to-be—
Lust for immortality
Shakes in sound, and floats in light,
Through the darkness: through the night
Clouds, and dreams, and fireflies,
And my songs of her arise.*

HOLY LIGHT

Life, where your lone candle burns
In the darkness of the night,
Mothlike my lost spirit turns
Toward you, in its circling flight.

Steadily your beauty draws
Onward, with each hurrying breath—
Till I flutter, till I pause
In the radiance of death.

I am flaming, I am fled—
All around you reigns the night;
But my agony has fed
You, a moment, holy light.

THE SILENCE

In the evening, in the quiet Park, we walked together,
After so many and after so many years—
We walked again in the evening, in the warm May
weather,
After the partings and tears.

And under the splendor, under the starry skies,
We walked, without sound or sigh, in a calm unbroken,
As the dead walk together in a long-lost Paradise—
Silent, with no word spoken.

POSSESSION

The call of a bird from the woodland—
In my body a slow, sweet pain:
Oh, my body is full of you
As the earth of the April rain.

To the call of the bird in the woodland
Answers a voice in my heart—
Up through my aching pulses
Your pulses tremble and start.

Oh, would I were yours again wholly,
And all my sorrow again
Lay bared—my pain, to your beauty—
As the earth to the April rain!

SPENT WAVE

Your loveliness was like a wave,
The sudden stroke of her delight
Flooded my heart's adoring cave;
The shock of the belovèd might
Startled the gloom to starry light—
That gave it back, and drank, and gave.

But broken, broken, is her strength,
That vehement glory loved before—
The sweet rage of her radiant length
Shattered and shed forevermore:
The adorable ardor, the dear might,
Hurled itself deathward with delight,
And sank upon the sounding shore.

PILGRIM

The cold wind cries across the rolling dunes,
The gray sails fleck the margins of the world—
I watch the rolling dunes along the barren sky,
And wan, white waters by the swift wind hurled.

Oh, where are Queen Faustina, and Babylon, and Tyre,
And pale Troy, lost in a silver mist of tears—
And I, O earth, your child, older than all these others,
What have you done to me these many thousand years!

DEPARTURE

Room that I have loved, farewell to you forever,
I leave with you the dream lost beyond recall—
Softly through the window pours the lonely moonlight,
Slumbers on the bed, slumbers on the wall.

Faint in glimmering fields the grasshoppers are shrilling,
As on nights of old; and a cricket, too,
Sounds his tender note solemnly and slowly—
Branches, in the light, droop all drenched with dew.

Here is the low table where we laughed together,
Chairs, where we have sat, huddle side by side:
In the quiet night-time the old house is musing
Upon vanished days and old hopes that died.

Where my youth has sorrowed, now lies only moonlight,
Moonlight on the bed, moonlight on the floor—
And across the pillow where your head lay dreaming,
O my lost beloved, moonlight evermore.

V

THE BLACK PANTHER

There is a panther caged within my breast,
But what his name, there is no breast shall know
Save mine, nor what it is that drives him so,
Backward and forward, in relentless quest—
That silent rage, baffled but unsuppressed,
The soft pad of those stealthy feet that go
Over my body's prison to and fro,
Trying the walls forever without rest.

All day I feed him with my living heart,
But when the night puts forth her dreams and stars,
The inexorable frenzy reawakes:
His wrath is hurled upon the trembling bars,
The eternal passion stretches me apart,
And I lie silent—but my body shakes.

IMMENSITY

At noon I watched,
In the large hollow of unclouded heaven,
A soaring hawk climb slowly toward the sun
Through gyres of adoration without end.
His flight was a great prayer.

ANDANTE

The evening steals like an ocean around your playing,
Whose perfect tones move on the sombre deep
With a grave gesture, and sigh into a sleep,
George, where your hands, along the piano straying,
An intricate rhythm keep—

And all the room is starry with your dreaming,
And limitless and vague; the pallid square
Of the window-pane shimmers behind you there,
Framing the street, where the first lights are gleaming,
Transfigured now and fair,

When Schumann speaks so firmly and so sadly,
And all the twilight rustles, wave on wave.
Oh, at that smile his wondering spirit gave,
What new smile in all things shines back so gladly,
Grown dignified and grave!

The curtains by the window rise and flutter,
The ornaments on the mantel, row on row,
Seem touched with a melancholy of long ago—
What is it the music dreams, but cannot utter?
Schumann—we know, we know.

* * * * *

Silence—the lamplight, through the window streaming,
Falls on the listless keyboard, smooth and white—
Remembered music dreams in the dull light;
And you, too, George, sit silently and dreaming,
Alone, into the night.

IN THE SOLITUDE

Give me your pitiful, soft hand, and lay
Your cheek against my shoulder, let your head
Rest heavily, and your loose hair be shed
Where the heart breaks with what it cannot say—
Springtime is in the air, the winds of May
Rustle the heavy curtains, and are fled;
Give me your hand—ah, let no word be said,
Let the great will of silence have its way.

You do not love me, and at last I know
How far lies the lost land for which I pine—
But in the lonely passion of my mood
I feel your pulses toward my pulses flow,
And the dear blood that, through your hand, to mine,
Whispers her pity in the solitude.

ANNE

Belovèd—O adorable and false—
Whom have you taken now in the dear toils?

By what pale margins do your footsteps stray,
Or what enchanted wood? What valleys hold
The lily of your loveliness? What hills
Have known your weight upon them, what far shores?

Twilight comes tenderly, while evening lifts
Along the pallid rim her lonely star—

Oh, happy heart on which your heart is laid!

HAUNTED EARTH

Heaven at last
Is bared, and the whole world one radiant room—
Black are the shadows, in great pools of gloom
By copse and thicket cast.

The cattle browse
With sound of gentle breathing, and their breath
Is mild in glimmering meadows, or beneath
Drooped branches where they drowse;

While, 'mid the chill
Shadows, and cold clear moonlight all about,
A single bat goes dipping in and out
Softly, and all is still.

Silence around,
Save for a cricket! Lapped in slumbrous peace
Lie hill and meadowland—the shining seas
Lap on them, without sound.

It is earth's cry
Lifted in adoration: the old dream,
Beauty, is with her—and her hour supreme
That goes so swiftly by.

Too well she knows
The sweet illusion, from some heavenly shore
Visitant—the bright word that evermore
Troubles her dark repose.

Her heart lies bare—
Drunken, drunken, she lifts a dreamy breast;
Hour by hour, in rapture and unrest
Flows the unending prayer.

The path of night
Reaches, from rim to rim, a radiant road
On which the exalted beauty walks abroad
In wonder and wild light.

Upon what eyes,
Lifted in homesickness, now falls again
The loveliness that haunts the world with pain—
Light out of Paradise!

VAUDEVILLE DANCER

When, to a cheap and tawdry tune, the orchestra cried
out,
Frantic, in violent syncopation, you began
With slender, imperious body in mournful grace to move
about
Through the old devious patterns, the device of man.

How suddenly then, silent magnificence, you put to
shame
The crowded and garish theatre, the strangled cries
Of flute and trumpet—O mortal body, bearer of our
flame
Through the drear lands of death, guardian of the mys-
teries!

Revered, reviled, wept and adored, besought, cried out
upon
By hungering lips of the ages—the sacred source of things,
That glimmered in Thrace, that shone in Rome, that
swayed in Babylon,
Here moves to the vile throb of castanets and strings.

Oh, through what generations have you lured, what
secret ways,
Man's fainting heart to be reborn—what splendors move
Deep in his breast when, dolorous, your reluctant beauty
sways
In the old weary rhythms of unwearied love!

IN THE DARK CITY

There is a harper plays
Through the long watches of the lonely night
When, like a cemetery,
Sleeps the dark city with her millions lying each in his
tomb.

I feel it in my dream, but when I wake—
Suddenly, like some secret thing not to be overheard,
It ceases,
And the gray night grows dumb. Only in memory
Linger those veiled adagios, fading, fading . . .
Till, with the morning, they are lost.

What door was opened then?
What worlds, undreamed of, lie around us in our sleep,
That yet we may not know?
Where is it one sat playing,
Over and over, with such high and dreadful peace,
The passion and sorrow of the eternal doom?

OF DAY CAME NIGHT

We lay by the sea, and knew
Darkness must make us one—
Heaven was thrilled clean through
By the trumpets of the sun,
The sea burned gold and blue.

The sand, in the pale heat,
Was parched as desert sand—
Your wrist, where the veins meet,
The cool veins of your hand,
Made thirst seem bitter-sweet.

Never a word was said
Of what must be so soon,
In longing and in dread
The golden afternoon
Burned down, till dusk was shed.

It was not hope, nor fear,
Yet something of them both,
That held us trembling here,
Half eager and half loath
For darkness, dread but dear.

Few were the words were spoken,
But in each other's eyes
We read the certain token
That sealed our destinies—
Our wings of pride were broken.

So, while the waters paled
Around us, and the west
Fainted, our hearts that failed,
In silence were confessed—
Silence at last prevailed.

And now up her clear stair
The evening-star began
To climb, where heaven was bare
A homing fish-hawk ran
Down avenues of air.

Night swallowed up the sun,
And darkness, like a hood,
Sank, and the sea breathed on—
In silence and solitude
Love's very will was done.

THE FISH-HAWK

On the large highway of the ample air that flows
Unbounded between sea and heaven, while twilight
screened

The sorrowful distances, he moved and had repose;
On the huge wind of the immensity he leaned
His steady body, in long lapse of flight—and rose

Gradual, through broad gyres of ever-climbing rest,
Up the clear stair of the untrammelled sky, and stood
Throned on the summit! Slowly, with his widening breast,
Widened around him the enormous solitude,
From the gray rim of ocean to the glowing west.

Headlands and capes forlorn, of the far coast, the land
Rolling her barrens toward the west, he, from his throne
Upon the gigantic wind, beheld: he hung, he fanned
The abyss, for mighty joy, to feel beneath him strown
Pale pastures of the sea, with heaven on either hand—

The world, with all her winds and waters, earth and air,
Fields, folds, and moving clouds. The awful and adored
Arches and endless aisles of vacancy, the fair
Void of sheer heights and hollows, hailed him as her lord
And lover in the highest, to whom all heaven lay bare.

Till from that tower of ecstasy, that baffled height,
Stooping, he sank; and slowly on the world's wide way
Walked, with great wing on wing, the merciless, proud
 Might,
Hunting the huddled and lone reaches for his prey,
Down the dim shore—and faded in the crumbling light.

Slowly the dusk covered the land. Like a great hymn
The sound of moving winds and waters was; the sea
Whispered a benediction, and the west grew dim
Where evening lifted her clear candles quietly. . . .
Heaven, crowded with stars, trembled from rim to rim.

MOCKERY

In dreams you come to mock me, in deep night,
When all the world is dark and slumber-still,
Save for the gleaming of the pale starlight
And far-off wailing of the whip-poor-will.

Then, through the room that held you once, you move
With the old carelessness and dear disdain,
And lift your hands up in the way I love,
And the old ritual we repeat again.

Still, from your lips that secret I entreat,
The question still unanswered evermore—
And on your lips your finger-tip in sweet
Command you lay, and silence, as before;

And, in the pallor of the waning night,
Laughing, but silently, you fade away:
And morning glimmers, and the feeble light
Widens into the common blaze of day.

LEGEND

Where are you hid from me, belovèd one
That I am seeking through the lonely world—
A wanderer, on my way home to you?
Dark is the night, and perilous the road;
At many a breast in longing have I leaned,
At many a wayside worshipped—and my heart
Is tired from long travelling. Perhaps
In centuries to come you wait for me,
And are, as yet, an iris by the stream,
Lifting her single blossom, or the soft
Tremulous haze upon the hills—and we
Have missed each other. Oh, if it be so,
Then may this song reach to the verge of doom,
Ages unborn—to find you where you are,
My lonely one—and like a murmuring string,
Faint with one music, endlessly repeat,
To you not even knowing I was yours,
Her plaintive burden from the dolorous past
Of dusty legend, her archaic woe—
Telling of one upon a hopeless quest,
How, in the dark of time, he lost his way.

THE LION-HOUSE

Always the heavy air,
The dreadful cage, the low
Murmur of voices, where
Some force goes to and fro
In an immense despair.

As through a haunted brain—
With tireless footfalls
The obsession moves again,
Trying the floor, the walls,
Forever, but in vain.

In vain, proud force! A might,
Shrewder than yours, did spin
Around your rage that bright
Prison of steel, wherein
You pace for my delight.

And oh, my heart, what doom,
What warier will, has wrought
The cage, within whose room
Paces your burning thought,
For the delight of Whom?

VI

NOON: AMAGANSETT BEACH

Glory—glory to God in the highest—and on earth,
Glory! The everlasting sun
Has laid his hand upon the harp-string, with the music
 of his mirth
Heaven and ocean are one chord, in unison.

He has spoken, he has spoken—from his midmost throne
In the blue hollow of noon, he has spoken! Heaven has
 heard
The sound of the song of his shining; he has made known
To listening space his paeon, his joy-awakening word,

Who sheds his light upon the earth—and upon the dark
 place,
Light! And upon the waters of the sea,
Light! O Father, pour down thy light upon me, touch my
 face!
Hallow me, my Father—even me.

Here, where the long ranges of the dunes roll
Their tawny billows to the east and to the west, and
 against the sky
Flutters the pale beach-grass, fresh is the wind—and the
 whole
Clear hollow of heaven is full of the wine of thy glory,
 even as I.

The waves curve upward—they fail, they fall,
Dragging, dragging, along the dim sea-reach,
The heavy hem of the garment of the waters; rhythmical,
rhythmical,
Is the rustle of the sea's robe upon the beach.

Along the shallows, along the far shore-line
They burst in thunder and light—where the spent surges
lie,
The tongue of the foam is a tongue of fire; the hollows
of the breakers shine,
Darken—and make music as they die.

But out where the farther waters have their sleep,
On the pale meadows of ocean, on the barren fields and
bare,
That the sea-bird wanders, that the sea-wind wanders—
on the illimitable Deep,
Silence. The silence of the immensity is like a prayer.

Interminable—interminable—interminable—the void sea,
The many ways, the many waves. In the huge round
Of the sorrowful heavens, in the hushed vacancy,
No voice. Vastness without bound.

This is my heart's country: these lonely lands
Are one with my own lonely heart; these winds and
waves that roam
Old, desolate ways forever, they are one with me—these
sterile sands
And bitter waters. Here is my heart's home.

Amid these large horizons and spaces that she loves,
My spirit's thought, on lorn adventurings
And inconsolable quests intent, endlessly moves—
And spreads upon the eternal solitude her fleeting wings:

Lost as a sea-bird on the changeless, changing,
Pale pastures lost, as a sea-bird on the wild waste astray,
Searching the everlasting reaches—failing—faltering—
 like a sea-bird ranging—
Wandering, wandering the wide way.

* * * * *

Loneliness—loneliness forever. Dune beyond dune,
Stretches the infinite loneliness—pale sand and paler
 grass,
Pale beaches, mile upon mile. In the immensity of noon
A hawk moves upon the wind. Clouds darken, and
 pass. . . .

The sound of the breathing of the sea is hushed, on the
 far shore
Her robe lies fallen; the slack waves, one by one,
Rise up and curl over, foam up and fall over: from the
 blue vault to the blue floor
Heaven is a shining room filled full of the sun.

He hallows the waters. The benediction of his light is
 shed
Upon the proud waters. Emerald—turquoise—chryso-
 prase,
Glitter the waters! The garment of his glory is spread
Upon the everlasting waters, upon the everlasting ways.

THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY

Heaven is full of stars to-night, the earth
Lies hushed, as she shall lie some day perhaps,
When life and death no longer trouble her—
No voice, no cry, in the whole countryside.
The empty road rambles through field and thicket,
And in the road are prints of hoof and foot:
Along the surface of this lonely planet,
Now naked to the hunger of the stars,
Man and beast—on the old pilgrimage—
They passed together here, not long ago.

What was it they were looking for, I wonder,
Or if, themselves, they knew? Where were they going?
Footsteps—always footsteps going somewhere—
What country is it that they all are seeking,
Who up and down the world, by night or day,
Move with such patience, always to one end?

Not the least sound. Not the least leaf disturbs
The immemorial reticence of heaven.
Footprints—only footprints going somewhere. . . .

Wherever they were going, they are gone.

THE HOLY EARTH

In the immense cathedral of the holy earth,
Whose arches are the heavens and the great vault above,
Groined with its myriad stars, what miracles of birth,
What sacraments of death, what rituals of love!

Her nave is the wide world and the whole length of it,
One flame on all her altars kindles her many fires;
Wherever the clear tapers of trembling life are lit
Resound for joy the old, indomitable choirs.

The holy church of earth with clamorous worshippers
Is crowded, and fierce hungers, faithful every one
To the one faith; that stern and simple faith of hers
Contents the heart that asks no pity, giving none.

Each on the other feeds, and all on each are fed,
And each for all is offered—a living offering, where
In agony and triumph the ancient feast is spread,
Life's sacramental supper, that all her sons may share.

They mingle with one another, blend—mingle—merge,
and flow
Body into wild body; in rapture endlessly
Weaving, with intricate motions of being, to and fro,
The pattern of all Being, one mighty harmony:

One Body, of all bodies woven and interwrought—
One Self, in many selves, through their communion
In love and death, made perfect, wherein each self is
nought
Save as it serve the many, mysteriously made One.

And all are glad for life's sake, and all have found it
good
From the beginning; all, through many and warring ways,
In savage vigor of life and wanton hardihood
Live out, like a brave song, the passion of their days.

With music woven of lust and music woven of pain,
Chapel and aisle and choir, the great cathedral rings—
One voice in all her voices chaunting the old disdain
Of pity, the clean hunger of all primal things.

From the trembling of Arcturus even to the tiny nest
Of the grey mouse, the glories of her vast frame extend:
The span of her great arches, stretching from east to west,
Is measureless—the immense reaches are without end.

* * * * *

Evening closes. The light from heaven's west window falls
Graver and softer now. In vain the twilight pleads
With stubborn night—his shadow looms on the massive
walls.

Darkness. The immemorial ritual proceeds.

The spider in her quivering web watches and waits;
The moth flutters entangled, in agony of fear
He beats among the toils that bind him; she hesitates
Along the trembling wires—she pauses—she draws near,

She weaves her delicate bondage around him; in the net,
As in a shroud, he labors—but, labor as he will,
The cunning threads hold fast; her drowsy mouth is set
Against the body that shivers softly, and is still.

And through the leafy dark the owl with noiseless flight
Moves, peering craftily among the tangled trees
And thickets of the wood all slumbrous in the night—
The fledgling's bitter cry comes sharp upon the breeze.

With dreadful ceremony all things together move
To the one end: shrill voices in triumph all around
Prolong deliriously their monotone of love—
Arches and aisles are heavy with incense and dim sound.

Hush, the whole world is kneeling! Murmurous is the
air—
The Host is lifted up. Upon the altar lies
The sacramental Body. The wind breathes like a prayer—
Solemnly is renewed the eternal sacrifice.

With mingled moan and might of warring wills made one
The vast cathedral shudders. From chancel, nave and
choir
Sounds the fierce hymn to life: her holy will be done!
Upon her myriad altars flames the one sacred fire.

THIS QUIET DUST

Here in my curving hands I cup
This quiet dust. I lift it up.

Here is the mother of all thought,
Of this the shining heavens are wrought,
The laughing lips, the feet that rove,
The face, the body that you love:
Mere dust, no more—yet nothing less;
And this has suffered consciousness,
Passion and terror; this again
Shall suffer passion, death, and pain.

For, as all flesh must die, so all,
Now dust, shall live. 'Tis natural,
Yet hardly do I understand—
Here in the hollow of my hand
A bit of God Himself I keep,
Between two vigils fallen asleep.

THE MASQUE OF BEING

The fish-hawk over the water and the pale fish that goes
Glimmering through the water—the preyer and the
prey—

They follow or hasten ever; they wrestle together, they
close

In the old fearful fashion, in the old fierce way.

Harsh are the rites of being, and bitter is the war
Waged between life and life by the blind will-to-be—
Yet all, if they but knew it, are one: lovers they are
Who strive, each with the other, in a great mystery.

SEA-VOYAGE

To what dark purpose was the Will employed
That fashioned, ere the dawn of time grew dim,
The waste of ocean—from clear rim to rim
A crystal chamber, sorrowful and void?

For, surely, not without design He wrought
These vast horizons on whose margins rest
The extremes of heaven, nor from east to west
Widened the waters to the bounds of thought.

Half-hopeful, half-incredulous, I wait
For some gigantic Presence to assume
His throne in the large circle of the room.
The dreadful distances are desolate.

In vain! In vain! He is departed hence
Whose breath troubles the waters of the sea:
Twilight and night are sworn to secrecy,
The heavens preserve their ancient innocence.

In the enormous throne-room of the sun
No voice is audible. The waves are mute.
Solitude, infinite and absolute,
Bears witness to the unreturning One.

Evening, on the lorn reaches of the sea,
Comes vast and patient; but the night is kind—
Her hand is pity, scarfing up the blind
Sorrows and wastes of the immensity.

The wind is soft among the swaying spars.
Heaven deepens; dusk reveals the glittering height
And cloudless glory of the arch of night,
Bowed down from rim to rim with solemn stars.

When dawn across the broad and billowing plain
Casts her pale fire, the monstrous solitude
Of huddling waters—the old hope renewed—
Thrills with blind love, and yearns, but all in vain.

Sheer to the east, sheer to the west extend,
Far as the wandering wings of thought may grope,
The eternal vacancies. No hope, no hope—
Distance, distance forever, without end.

Hour by hour and day on burning day,
Our vessel plows the soft, reluctant foam;
Hour by hour and mile on mile, we roam
The lonely and the everlasting way.

Still fades before us the enormous round—
Blue sea below, blue heaven overhead—
The Void, eternal and untenanted,
A chamber for His splendor, without bound.

THE LOWLAND COUNTRY

Oh, that I might be again
In the leafy solitudes
Where the ancient beauty broods
And the heart is healed of pain!

In a certain hidden place
Shined on by the evening-star,
Where the woods and waters are
Dear as a belovèd face.

'Tis a country to my mind:
All the hills and heights are green,
With clear meadows in between—
All the woods and ways are kind.

There the spider all day long
Spins her web with cunning skill,
And the cricket on the hill
Makes one music of his song.

Night and day, a dreamy noise
Hovers round it—night and day;
And the world is far away,
And the silence has a voice.

In the lowlands, in the deep
Solitude for miles around,
To a hushed and happy sound
Time itself has fallen asleep.

Oh, that I were there again,
By the meadows drenched with dew!
Where the ancient dream comes true,
And the heart is healed of pain.

STONE AND IRON

Night—and the shadow of great walls.
The city sleeps: her muffled pulses start—
And ebb, flagging in the long intervals.
I lie alone, with wakeful heart.

In stone and iron bound,
Brood the old sorrows—longing and heartache
In many a room are fierce awake.
My heart listens. Not a sound.

My heart listens. A cry
Pierces the dark—a lonely voice somewhere
Trembles, and is still. I hear a cry
Out of the dark, somewhere.

Night slumbers on. . . .
The cañons are
Empty—no echo save .
For a lone car
Far-off, that rumbles and is gone.
Then silence—the silence of the grave.

AUTUMN ALONG THE BEACHES

A year, with all its days, has come and gone
Since last under the arch of heaven I stood
In the old ecstasy, and looked upon
These endless waters, this bleak solitude.

All is unchanged: the sea-birds wheel and pass,
The patient dunes go down along the sky
In wavering lines of green, from the scant grass
A single cricket lifts his solemn cry.

Autumn is on the wind; the chilly air
Is wide and vacant, the pale waters seem
Paler and lonelier—lonely and bare
The tawny beaches, fading like a dream.

On the right hand of heaven there is light,
And on the left is darkness, and the gray
Cover of cloud; westward the sea is bright,
But eastward, sorrow and shadow all the way.

Dull blues and purples, glossy black and green,
On the one hand—and, on the other, sheer
Glory of gold. The waters in between
Are doubtful—half in hope, and half in fear.

But always a cold light along the rim
Wells secretly; the under-heavens cast
Cold light along the verge, under the dim
Borders of darkness where the clouds are massed.

Around one center the slow bulk revolves;
Far out, a haze curtains the mystery
Of some ecstatic deed—the cloud dissolves,
And sheds his drifting rain upon the sea.

It is the bridal of heaven and ocean; brief
Is the rapt moment ere the gauzy veil,
Crumbling, is lifted. As with tremulous grief
Of parting, the divided wastes are pale.

Wan wastes of wave, and glimmering wastes that crowd
The worn horizon—passion and regret.
Sea-scud, and faltering light, and trailing cloud,
Reluctant, where the old longing labors yet.

The slant rain slackens. From the hopeful, blue
Meadows of heaven, widening evermore,
A sudden shaft of light comes piercing through,
And points a shining finger down the shore.

Alternate gleam and shadow! Like a wand
The running radiance all along the line
Travels, with soundless motion. Far beyond,
Headlands and dunes and brightening beaches shine.

Darkness is rolled away: the great banks move
Northward, save for a few high streaks that show
The vault of heaven still higher, far above—
So high they seem, yet lie so far below.

They move like swans upon an azure lake—
The bleak skies of the autumn afternoon
Wash round them, in chill loveliness, and make
Their fleecy edges brighter, fading soon.

The room of the world is bare from bound to bound,
A vacant chamber: heaven overhead
Is a blue ceiling; the heavens that wall it round
Are blue; before me the blue floors are spread.

Blue mile on mile, from deep to azure height
Southward, the everlasting arches loom—
Blue mile on mile forever, to the bright
Limits. The world is like an empty room.

On the void sea no sail, no sign. Far out,
A lone bird, through the shifting corridors
Of billowing water blown and tossed about,
Wavers and veers along the windy floors.

Loneliness, endlessness, and mystery!
No voice disturbs the silence of the sun.
No shadow is on the surface of the sea.
The clouds are scattered, and darkness is undone.

The huddled waters in their sorrow move
At the wind's will, that herds them without stay
Over the barren reaches, drove on drove—
A myriad waves all moving the one way.

THE HEART GROWS OLD

I have come back at last to the old home,
After long days of absence: it was here
That in my burning youth I loved and sang,
And all that I have loved and lost is here;
And still the meadows and the woods are dear
And beautiful—though now to me they are
Less beautiful, less dear.

Earth and her dreams remain forever young,
It is not beauty that grows old, but I:
The moon floods the pale cloud, and from the grass
The cricket sounds the endless song—but I
Am silent. Listen!—it is the screech-owl's cry.
O heart of mine, what distance have we come
Since last we heard that cry!

RETURN TO EARTH

I have no fear at last to be
Home with her that cradled me,
Nor shall my being shrink to blend
With her dark being in the end,
So one we are, so well I know
The bounty of the heart below—
Her holy love. Have I not heard
The lonely and prophetic word
Her hushed hills and valleys keep
Locked in their eternal sleep!
In Bethlehem, in buried days,
So the sacred story says,
Out of her ancient dream awoke
The elemental heart, and spoke
Such thunder in the ears of men
As echoes ever after—then
Closed her lips in sleep again.

SOLITUDES

My heart is a dark forest where no voice is heard,
Nor sound of foot, by day or night—nor echo, borne
Down the long aisles and shadowy arches, of a horn,
Trembling—nor cry of beast, nor call of any bird.

But always through the deep solitudes a grieving wind
Moves, like the voice of a vast prayer: it is your love
Lifting and bending leaf and bough—while, far above,
One thought soars like a hawk, in the heaven of my mind.

ONCE IN A LONELY HOUR

Upon my breast
Once, in a lonely hour, your head was laid,
And you had rest
From much that troubled you—you were no longer afraid.

But now, even here
No refuge is: you shall not ever lie,
As once, in my heart's shelter here,
Poor heart, while the great winds of time go roaring by.

Vain was the strength
You leaned on in that hour—you did not guess
How vain the strength
On which you propped your ignorant lovingness.

And yet—what more
Has life to offer life, here in the lone
Tumult? A little rest, no more—
Upon a heart as troubled as its own.

THE DARK MEMORY

It was our love's Gethsemane, and you wept.
Around us, in the drab twilight, the little room
That had known our love, that had known our tears and
our laughter, kept
Shamed silence. Silently round us rose the gloom—

And in the street the first few lamps were gleaming—
day's
Last fire on garish windows glared. The light
Feebled; over the huddled city's wastes and ways
Gravely and pitifully came the night.

Darkness—and from far-off a siren mourned. The sands
Of time drew downward, but still no word was said,
No word—only your poor hands lying in my hands,
So hopeless, against my shoulder your poor head.

You were so tired, you were so hushed, so fain,
Poor love, all blind with weeping; pinched and small
Your face shone in the glimmer—but I, who felt no
pain
Save pity, I was so eager to end it all.

And I could not endure it; suddenly my heart grew old,
In the gray evening, in the drab twilight—while, one by
one,
Your hot tears ached along my hands. Oh, stern and cold
I sat beside you, in that last hour, and you wept alone.

* * * * *

Brief was our parting, very brief, and without a word.
With a mute kiss we parted—you turned, and I,
Closing the door, in the outer hall-way heard,
Already as if from far away, your sudden cry.

That cry! What silences followed—what silences haunt
the space
Of the years grown wide between us! On barren rhyme
I have wreaked my youth; I have followed a phantom
loveliness—your face
Fades in the hungry darknesses of time.

But now, in my nights, now, in my loneliness, I know
The bitter passion that moved those tears—and why,
When my life went home to you, when the tides groped,
you shuddered so—
And the agony of that love, the dolor of that cry.

Had you foreseen, O wise and sad, the unkind ways
My feet must wander, on strange roads? Did you foresee,
Beyond that wilful hour, the desolate nights and days—
And the tears that I pitied so, were they shed for me?

Oh, fatuous dream, that like a sword clove us apart!
Dear room, where once your sorrowing lips on mine
Trembled—where humbly for my proud and ignorant
heart
You broke the bread and poured the living wine!

Often, often now, in the silence of the after-years,
In the night, I remember your weeping. O my own,
In the darkness I have remembered them, your sacred
tears,
Shed for my sake—and how you wept alone.

HUSHED MIDNIGHT

I heard the owlet call,
A little, quavering call—
Timidly, timidly, out of the dark it cried:
'Twas midnight,
By candle-light
I sat alone, and the light was burning low,
And I thought of you that once had loved me so,
And of my lonely youth, my stubborn pride.
Heart of my heart, it was you, out there in the night—
It was you that cried.

I SOUGHT YOU

I sought you but I could not find you, all night long
I called you, but you would not answer—all the night
I wandered over hill and valley; heaven was bright
With crowded stars, and I was calling you in many a
song.

The road through wood and meadow rambled here and
there:

Few were the travellers on that lonely road, and none
Had heard of you, by wood or meadowland—not one
Had heard of you, or seen you passing anywhere.

At midnight, thirsting for your loveliness, I lay
Under the shadow of the leafy hill, and cried
Three times, calling upon your name. No voice
replied. . . .

The pebbly brooks went babbling, babbling, all the way.

The waters had a drowsy sound, the hills were steep—
My heart grew tired travelling; but there was no place
That suited me, and I was homesick for your face.
Dreaming of you, at the wood's edge I fell asleep.

REVERBERATION

At night, in the old house of life I lie alone:
Spiders have fastened their soft webs, like clouds, between
Rafter and ceiling; threshold and gray floor are grown
Heavy with dust, where for so long no foot has been.

Mice, in the dark of the old walls, gnaw at the deep
Roots of the night, and softly on the dewy air
The cricket's song comes drifting in—even in sleep
I hear it, but I am too sorrowful to care.

He sings for unimaginable joy; he makes
Music, all night, of my lost youth; his happy cry
Thrills through the dark like a familiar voice, that wakes
In my unanswering breast hardly a memory.

Love has left me, and song has left me, and I know
I am a harp, silent to all those lovely things
That laid such hands upon me here so long ago.
Night deepens—echo slumbers along the strings.

So many a night with all its stars has come and gone,
Watching my rest; so many an evening all in vain
Has lit for me her trembling lamps. Sleep is upon
These eyelids, that are sealed in slumber and disdain.

Only the murmur, vaguely felt, of the hushed blood,
That on the shores of the old dream, like a vast sea,
Moves, in the darkness, mourning; and in the solitude
Of my heart's forest a far horn sounds drowsily.

GOLGOTHA

Take me down from this cross, for now my body is
broken,
And the feet pierced and the hands pierced, and in my
side
The heart fails me—it breaks, and the words that I have
spoken
Are as nothing: you were deceived in me, and I have
lied.

Take me down, lower me from the tree—yet slowly,
My spirit is heavy and my heart sick, my flesh is sore
From the bruising and from the bitter scourging, and
the holy
Dream that was in me once is in me now no more.

There is no virtue left in me, there is not any
Hope left in me to help you: if it must be done,
As it was written in the old days, that one for many
Should be uplifted—truly, I am not that one.

The nails bite deep into my flesh—shall I endure it
Longer? No longer! Loose me, take me down and lay
My body in the cool tomb—and seal it up, secure it
Against the faces, the proud faces, the blind day.

For I am tired and have need of night to cover me,
And secrecy wherein to hide my shame, and deep
Silence and solitude forevermore, and over me
Darkness—and a lone resting-place and a long sleep.

And yet, nevertheless, perhaps a little longer
I may endure it. Father, if this thing must be,
Give me the strength! Ah yet, perhaps, a little longer—
I will pour out Thy love upon them in my agony.

EVENING CONTEMPLATION

Evening has quieted the wind, the night
Is soft around me while I sit alone,
And reading, by calm candle-light.

The voice of a forgotten poet cries,
From the clear page, up to my listening heart—
And my heart listens, and replies.

And yet, even in loveliness I find
No refuge from old wonder; the old thoughts
And the old questions come to mind.

Was it for this the ravin and the rage,
The lust and hunger of the centuries,
Clamored—to close in this calm page?

What blood was shed for this! What roving herds
In meadowy pastures, what brave things, have died
To feed the music of these words!

I will not think of this, I will read on
In these calm pages. It is written here:
The Song to the Belovèd One.

The heart that wrought it, and the cunning hand,
Are stilled forever, and the poet lies,
Forgotten, in a far-off land.

The iron bondage of old Time and Space
Withholds me from him, whom I have not seen—
Nor shall I look upon his face.

He takes his ease in the dark earth and there
Has rest from all his labors, and the night
Covers him with her heavy hair.

If I could pierce into that hushed abode
Of slumber and corruption, I should find
The mouth from which this sorrow flowed.

It would be quiet now, for all it cried—
Quiet and imperturbable: it is
With its own sleep preoccupied.

Yet, surely, in this very room it sings
Miraculously to my heart to-night!
How shall I understand these things?

I will not think of them, I will read on
In these calm pages. It is written here:
The Song to the Belovèd One.

The night is hushed around me while I move
Darkly, with dreaming thought, from page to page,
From line to line, of grief and love.

Now, in the silence of the night, I read
These words, the opening of the final prayer:
Song, for thy sake, with Death I plead.

The lonely splendor of Antares shines
Through the barred window, and an aphid crawls
Among the letters and the lines.

He moves among them with uncertain will,
Fitfully, and between the words, "*I plead*,"
Falters a moment—then is still.

Little he guesses what these letters are,
Nor I the meaning of the trembling Word
Written beyond us, star on star.

The night covers us both, and we are driven,
Like leaves before the wind, through the immense
And glittering wilderness of heaven.

Earth takes us with her; silently she swings
Through the old orbit, bearing in her breast
The drowsy mouth—the mouth that sings.

And yet, all this lives only in my mind,
And when that darkens, the whole world will darken
Suddenly—the whole world go blind.

All I have touched, all I have loved and known,
Will fail me—and the breast of life draw back,
Leaving me in the dark, alone.

O starry universe, hung in the clear
Bell of my mind, be living in me now—
Dwell in me for a moment here!

How often, in the many minds of men,
Have you been born, only to pass away—
Dying, with every mind, again!

This is a thought that is too hard for me:
It is a bitter thing to think upon,
That, to myself, all this shall be

As if it had not been—when I am gone.

THE YEARS

My dreams wear thinner as the years go by:
The stony face of Fate into my own
Stares, with that granite look of hers—and I
Stare back, with a still face, but not of stone.

THE WOVEN DOOM

We are all woven of the one weaving,
Flower and bird and beast and tree:
The gray kingfisher and the trout,
The toad that spreads a tiny hand
On the earth's carpet quietly—
Heaven, shaken with storm and thunder,
Clouds and great waters, winds and snows,
The starry firmament, the grieving
Heart of man; through earth and sea,
The moth, the tiger, and the rose,
Petal and planet—strand on strand—
The wandering threads wind in and out,
With warp and woof, over and under,
Weaving the ancient unity.

We are all woven in one story,
One legend like a sorrow runs
Through creeds and crowns and buried wars,
Prophets and saviours crucified,
Great fortresses, and cities, once
Crowded, now crumbled and forsaken,
Captains and kings of old that spread
Their sails upon the sea: one glory
Speaks through them all—through swords and guns,
Hopes and defeats, and hearts that bled,
Lovers, or rulers in their pride,
Desolate lands, and the lone stars
That by the wind of Time are shaken,
And thronging worlds and flaming suns.

We are all moving on together,
In mystery, to the end unknown—
Through all the ways and days of earth:
The thief, the ploughman and the seer,
The dog, the emperor on his throne,
The head, bowed over eyes unseeing,
The dying face, the broken heart,
To the one end are moving, whether
Evil or good—but not alone.
Each in the other has a part.
Each, as he may, in hope or fear,
Love, lust, or labor, death or birth,
Works out the will of the One Being—
For One is all, and all are One.

VII

UNISON

There is a secret that the sober mood
Of science misses, it will not be bought
By the contriving mind however shrewd—

Within the cell, within the atom sought,
Within the inner center's whirling rings,
Sits the demonic joy that laughs at thought

And is the face behind the mask of things,
And is the measure of the choric dance,
The music of the song Creation sings.

Who shall unweave the web of Circumstance,
Or trace the pattern in the fugitive
And shifting tapestry of change and chance?

Or, having learned the pattern, who shall give
The answer then? What answer has been given
Ever, to any man, why man should live!

Not in the flesh, not in the spirit even,
Not in the cunning of the brain that rides
In mastery upon the roads of heaven,

Or charts the rhythm of the starry tides,
The answer and the truth are found, but where,
Deep at the very core, the Stranger bids—

And pours his courage through the heart's despair,
And works his healing in the body's wound,
And sheds his glory through the spirit. There

The answer is, the wisdom shall be found,
Which is the answer of the greening tree,
Which is the wisdom of the fruitful ground—

A wisdom older and more wise than we,
Dumb with a secret difficult to tell,
And inarticulate with mystery,

For, to define it, were a miracle.
Oh, not in the low moments but the great
The exultant rhythm is made audible

That sways the music at the heart of Fate,
To which Time in his passage and return
Moves, and the burdened heavens, with their weight

Of suns and planets, are moving as they burn—
The harmony in which all modes are bent
To the one meaning that they all must learn,

Of many and divergent meanings blent,
Of motions intricate and manifold,
With various voices weaving one consent!

Nor is it easy for the mind to hold
The extreme joy of things, or bear for long
The exalted beauty, hidden from of old,

Whose sure intent, immutable and strong,
Secret and tireless and undeterred,
Moves through the mazes of the winding song—

And whosoever in his heart has heard
That music, all his life shall toil to say
The passion of it. But there is no word—

No words are made for it. There is no way.

THE ANSWER

Toward dawn I came awake hearing a crow,
Perched on the roof-tree, lift his guttural cry
Twice on the shaken air of morning. No
Caw, answering, made reply.
The wood shivered, a wind began to sigh
Among the boughs already growing bare,
As drowsily I waited—and once more
That raucous question shook the vacant air.
Silence settled back slowly, as before.
I turned to sleep; I heard, half-waking there,
His harsh, vehement caw lifted again.
The frosty dawn was silent on the hill,
Silence over the listening wood—and then,
Faintly, from far away,
The answer came. Morning flowed into day.
All was still.

SILENCE

There is a mystery too deep for words;
The silence of the dead comes nearer to it,
Being wisest in the end. What word shall hold
The sorrow sitting at the heart of things,
The majesty and patience of the truth!
Silence will serve; it is an older tongue:
The empty room, the moonlight on the wall,
Speak for the unreturning traveller.

TOGETHER

On the old garden-seat that fronts the grove
His hands had planted, years gone by,
At dusk I sat, remembering one I love—
We had sat there together often, he and I;
And were together now, although no word was said—
I looked away into the quiet air,
Knowing that if I did not turn my head
I still might have him there.

EVENING

Nothing has altered the slow ritual
Of evening, in this country: her clear stars
Come quietly forever, and the sea
Has the same sound along the breathing shore.
The wind that sighed among the hemlock branches
Grows feebler, with the dusk; and in the house
The lamps are lit, and there are faces there
That time has made familiar, though one face
Is missing now, time will not bring again—
And one is newly welcomed. Earth sends up
Her voice of dreamy love out of the dark—
One voice in many voices. Gradual night.
Silence. The sorrowful mystery of things
Flows on forever. A little screech-owl comes
Crying about the house his timorous cry,
His tender cry, that once you loved so well.

FINALE

When death has carved me to his stern design
And of this self only the shell endures,
If any face look down with love on mine,
Belovèd, may it be yours.

In that bleak autumn, when the boughs are bare
And all sweet summers fled beyond recall,
Lean down your lips, my darling, and give me there
One kiss—the last of all.

BENISON

There is a star that shines more fair
Than any on the evening air,
So near and yet so far away
Is the soft brightness of its ray,
Fallen on one whose morning-dream
Has faded into dusk—a beam
From the high beauty that burns on
When all the evening stars are gone.

RECONCILIATION

At the foot of a great pine, in the wild country
Westward, well inland, we uncovered them,
The skeletons of a fish-hawk and a fish,
Half-buried in dead leaves. The long pursuit,
And the flight, ended; the terror, the conquest, ended,
And the wars that divide Being, they rested there—
Emblems of the inexplicable will.

NEW YORK

(EMPIRE STATE TOWER)

From this sheer tower, as from time's parapet,
My life looks back upon the world I know—
The desert where man's hope goes to and fro,
The iron ways in which his feet are set.
Oh, hope unquenchable—what blood, what sweat,
Fashioned this thing! What timeless sorrows flow
Beneath these towers and battlements that show
The heart of life indomitable yet!

Here is my world: these are the ways that knew
My spirit in its joy, the haunts that wore
The garment of my bitterness; you, too,
Belovèd, amid these millions in full flood,
Move somewhere, far from me—seem mine no more,
Made one now with the nameless multitude.

THE LETTER

The night is measureless, no voice, no cry,
Pierces the dark in which the planet swings—
It is the shadow of her bulk that flings
So deep a gloom on the enormous sky;
This timorous dust, this phantom that is I,
Cowers in shelter, while the evening brings
A sense of mystery and how all things
Waver like water and are gliding by.

Now, while the stars in heaven like blowing sand
Drift to their darkness, while oblivion
Hushes the fire of some fading sun,
I turn the page again—and there they stand,
Traced by love's fleeting but victorious hand,
The words: "My darling, my beloved one."

RESOLUTE SILENCE

In your stern mien I read it, in the high, inflexible air
And resolute silence that the dead,
Even for those they have loved, are used to wear—
The secret fallen between us, the strange new thing
 unsaid.

It is evening: the first, tremulous stars come into view,
Which you praised so well; while I, who watch here,
 caught
In the web you have broken, probe the old secrets we two
Warred on once with the spears of thought.

And it is as if you had deserted, gone over to these
That are leagued in their silence against us. You, too, in
 the end,
Sealed your lips, and are one now with the unforgiving
 mysteries—
Who were my friend.

OBSESSION

Toward evening the old house wakes to a frail
And tenuous music while the cricket sings
Unendingly of unremembered things—
A song as drowsy as a traveller's tale:
Autumn comes early, the cold light is pale
Along the rafter where the hornet clings
With heavy body and forgetful wings,
And from the shelf the spider hangs her veil.

By candle-light, in the accustomed chair,
I sit, still weaving webs for the wild thought
That never yet in any web was caught,
Of woven words, or net of tangled rhyme—
I know, and that the years shall find me there,
Toiling in hope until the end of time.

PRAYER TO THE SUN

My Father,
Here for a moment in your light I stand,
And feel upon my lifted face
Your touch, your touch, as of a father's hand.
Shine down upon me. See,
It is so little and so brief a thing
That drinks your light, remembering
The dark that was, the dark that is to be—
So soon to be again.
Oh, let your glance fall tenderly and mild!
Have pity now; and when
The night has taken me, have pity then,
Father, on me, your child.

SELF AND UNIVERSE

These are the hours of darkness that shall bring
The primal revelation: heaven betrays
Her very secret now—the starry maze,
The splendor beyond all imagining.
Behold the stately truth! Half-worshipping,
Half-doubtful, the poor spirit stands at gaze,
With her few, brief, and lamentable days,
Under the silence of that shining thing.

O everlasting fires and thrones of light,
A greater than yourselves confronts you here:
I dwelt among you; you abide in me.
I go—but, going, take into the night
That inner heaven, where you shone so clear
And lovelier than in reality.

LULLABY

Night comes on—
Night, and the peace you have desired.
Earth is calling, you are tired;
Earth draws you down.

The hope, the fear,
The labor, vain—your heart grows cold.
Time's secret is untold.
The light fails, that led you here.

Sleep, then—sleep is best:
The roads are many where we go astray;
All, all, by the one way
Come home, at the one heart have rest.



VIII

SCHERZO

LULLABY FOR ALISON

A rabbit has very few things,
And it doesn't seem quite fair:
He has ears but he has no wings,
He has fur but he has no hair,
He enchants yet he seldom sings;
But he has a sleeve of care.
When he doffs it at dusk, sleep will tend it,
Is it just a little worn? sleep will mend it—
Sleep that knits up the rabbit's sleeve of care.

A rabbit will seldom roam
Yet you'll find him everywhere,
When he's out, then he's at home,
When he's home, he's out somewhere;
And he uses his brush for a comb,
To comb his sleeve of care.
When he dons it at dawn, sleep has tended it,
Was it just a little worn? sleep has mended it—
Sleep that knits up the rabbit's sleeve of care.

A rabbit needs little sleep
But he's got to have his share,
His thoughts are very deep
When he has the time to spare,
And he'll worry himself to sleep
Over his sleeve of care.
But a little sleep will make it new again,
A little sleep will make it do again—
Sleep that knits up the rabbit's sleeve of care.

RANDOM REFLECTIONS ON A CLOUDLESS SUNDAY

Gulls, that live by the water and hang around docks,
Know about fish, how to fetch them out of the sea—
They know, also, how to split clams on rocks,
But nothing (and this gives them a certain dignity)
About "the seriousness of the present world situation."

The squirrel, that is so clever at cracking a nut
And indulges in such fascinating antics,
Can walk, head first, down the trunk of a tree, but
Knows little, if anything, about semantics—
The impression he leaves with me is rather a pleasant
one.

There is an alligator lives in the Zoo,
Who is gifted, though he neither paints nor sings—
He has made an art of having nothing better to do,
Never gets nervous or "takes a grave view of things."
I find him, for some reason or other, extremely attractive.

Do you think the world will end with a bang or a
whimper?
I'm rather inclined to think it won't end with a bang—
More probably with a simper,
Like that on the face of the little orang-outang
In Bronx Park when he's feeling so pleased with himself.

YOU AND THE YOU-NIVERSE

He who draws nearer to you, lovely one,
Is like a man who travels toward a sun,
Down some black well in heaven's starriest height
Sunken, one star amid the stars of night—
Equally beautiful they all appear;
Yet as he travels toward it, and draws near
The flame that burns his darkness into day,
Those other stars are all dissolved away,
The universe is dazzled out of view,
And there is nothing left but glorious You.

TO A BOB-WHITE

For the past two hours now
You have repeated the same note
Until I flinch at the mere thought of it.
Determination,
Functioning within discrete limits
To a well-defined end,
Is not ignoble,
But you have yet to learn when enough is enough.
Why labor the point
Of what already two hours ago
I had been willing to concede—
An assertion
In any case
Remarkable for nothing
Other than the pertinacity it so painfully exemplifies?
Now take yourself off
And let me hear no more about it;
Your note
Lacks the subtlety that would give its overtones
Implications worthy of the theme you essay.

COCKTAILS AT 5:30

"Here I come again, Mr. Smith. Are you having fun? Won't you be tempted by one of these canapé things? And where's your glass? Let me get you another one— You know, they say a bird can't fly with two wings."

THE BEETLE IN THE COUNTRY BATHTUB

After one more grandiloquent effort he slips back—
Slumping? Oh no, he may be down but he's never out
(Probably wishes he were); now, pondering a fresh at-
tack,

He wheels his slender, simonized bulk about,

Fumbles at the slippery surface until he has come to grips,
Mounts, very slowly, with ever-increasing hope, and then
Mounts, more slowly, with ever-increasing hope—and
slips

All the way down to the bottom of the tub again;

Lies there, motionless, pretty discouraged perhaps? not
he—

It's dogged as does it, keep your chin up, don't take
No for an answer, etc.—he plots a new strategy,
The oblique approach. This too turns out to be a mistake.

The enamelled surface of his predicament
Resembles those pockets in time and space that hold
Sick minds in torture, his struggle is a long argument
With a fact that refuses to be persuaded or cajoled.

Midnight finds him still confident. I slink to bed,
Worn out with watching. The suave heavens turn
Blandly upon their axis, overhead
The constellations glitter their polite unconcern.

Toward morning, hounded by anxiety, slumberless,
I post to the scene. Where is he? The enamelled slopes
below,

Vacant—the uplands, vacant—a bathtub full of empti-
ness,

The insoluble problem solved! But how? Something no
one of us, perhaps, will ever know.

Unless he went down the drain?

REQUIESCAT

The cat that all night long was a soprano
Despite his sex, which we shall not discuss,
Toward morning, after the long night's inferno
(And it *was* long), is still melodious.

As all great artists know, whether they favor
The Metropolitan or the back-yard,
The cat who lives for song must learn to savor
The horrid truth: the artist's life is hard.

The love-duet in *Tristan und Isolde*
Was unappreciated once, they say—
The love-song we are hearing, though far older,
Is unappreciated still to-day.

The random objects angry hands are flinging
From a dark window, opened quietly,
Halt, at its very height, that tender singing—
This is an act of grave discourtesy.

Four cans, two bottles, are but scant requital
For lofty song, and a distinguished cat,
Whose art is so significant and vital,
Has reason to expect much more than that.

And yet, at dawn, turning the matter over,
We are inclined to feel that, all in all,
A song purely personal to the lover
Is seldom more than merely personal.

SAGE COUNSEL

Yield everything to all men, even honor.
Never strike back. Whatever may befall,
Consider it a blessing, and sit down.
The world means well, it is benevolent.
Learn to control your indignation. Be
Submissive as a chicken under the axe.
Murder, what crimes are committed in thy name!

PLEASE TURN OFF
THE MOONLIGHT

Poet, aim to be smart,
Be clever and satiric,
Erudite, above all,
And never stoop to sing;
Reject the human heart,
Be witty, never lyric,
Verse should be visual—
And all that sort of thing.
A profile like that of a Greek monkey.

Whatever you indite,
Omit all feeling, passion
Is certain to offend
The analytic mind;
Take care that what you write
Is in the current fashion,
Follow the latest trend
And leave yourself behind.
She wrote in Spanish and he wrote in Brooklyn.

Learn what you have to do,
Verse should be "symptomatic"—
In a world that is not well
Don't try to make it fun.
Accent is now taboo,
It's most undemocratic
To stress one syllable
More than another one.
Do you know it's easier to chew glass than porcelain?

And, finally, make sure
You're not left unprotected
From readers, as from rain
A house without a roof.
Contrive to be obscure,
You'll soon be well protected—
Labor with might and main
Till you are reader-proof.
Ventriloquism, its place and purpose in the world crisis.

INTRA-MURAL ART

It was annoying to be kept awake,
Last night, by a rodent working in the wall,
Yet this one was an artist and for art's sake,
Or so I am told, should be forgiven all.
His art was penetrating, and unique
In its grasp of the essential material;
After last night I will concede him to be,
For resonance, for sheer intensity,
Distinction of tone and firmness of technique,
The outstanding tooth of our time in all rodentry.

VARIATION
ON A WALL STREET FAVORITE

I knew a man, a wise old bloke,
The less he heard, the more he spoke;
The more he spoke, the less he heard.
Why can't I be like that wise old bird!

THE VALETUDINARIAN

When the beach is tawny in the sun and the sky has only
Little feathery question-marks of cloud
And the sea dances, and I'm feeling far from lonely,
And a friend who thinks very loud and talks very loud
About Kierkegaard, Kafka, Rilke and Mallarmé,
Melville and James, in that peculiar way,
Night and day,
Invites me to take a little walk with him
Down the beach and have a little talk with him,
I always go, plodding along through the deep sand,
because I know it's very good for me.

When the sea is wrinkled with cold and the wind is
blowing,
And I got up late and am feeling rather dim
And decide to go back, and a friend says, "Where are you
going?
The water's wonderful, come on in for a swim,"
I hurry to take off my clothes in the bathing-box:
Coat, pants, shirt, drawers, undershirt, shoes and socks
With the white clocks—
And I put on my bathing suit, the better one,
I like it better than the wetter one,
And I plunge in, without a moment's hesitation, because
I realize it's extremely beneficial to my health.

When I'm sitting with a lovely girl, who is growing
dearer
Every moment, she is so sweet, and a moon all gold

Looks into the garden, and she says, "Won't you come
a little nearer?"

It's draughty there—I'm afraid of your catching cold;"
And there's music perhaps, the twang of a lone guitar,
And a voice somewhere, singing, and one star

Not too far,

If I feel the least tickling in nose or throat

I go in and put on my overcoat,

Because I've been given to understand that these premoni-
tory symptoms must on no account be neglected.

MOURNING-DOVE

(I used to think that I didn't like music, but now—now that I've heard him sing—I know that I don't. Journal of the Countess Growlinska.)

A bird who has nothing better to do has cried
His one note, over and over, the whole day long—
I wonder if he could vary it if he tried,
Or add just one other note to make it a song?

The note he loves so is certainly all his own,
And he has decided not to give it a rest;
It isn't especially pleasing, and from its tone
I gather that he is feeling rather depressed.

He has no sense of humor, since dawn he has said
The same thing, over and over, in the same way,
As if he wanted to hammer it into my head—
There he goes again, it's been like that all day.

A plague on those whose sense of humor is dim,
Who bludgeon us with a notion and call it song!
There are plenty of birds like mine—why, they copy
him—
I know, and I'd rather be President than be wrong.

SENTIMENTAL MONOLOGUE
AT SEVENTY

Young man that once I was, come talk with me,
Here where you sorrowed for so many a year;
Now, in my later wisdom, I could be
Quite helpful to the man who sorrowed here.

CATBIRD

The ritual of dawn ended, the jubilant choirs
That hailed the divine return, the victory over night,
And those high lonely later voices
Heard toward morning at the edge of light,
Now folded into their peace, all passion spent,
He mounts the platform of the nearest tree
And begins, almost too clearly perhaps,
To explain everything—
His argument rips the heart out of mystery.

The first statement is certainly plain,
Possibly incontrovertible: "From this,"
So he says, "it follows—but, to go back again
To our premise—for instance, the word *is*,
As meaning (considered, of course, ontologically
From the standpoint taken—the term is somewhat loose
In the context—); now, then, we—
To go back once more—from this deduce
The essential factors. Therefore, by inference, and—"

I am not certain that I understand,
But out of a cloud the sun looks down at me
And I am sitting here quite comfortably,
A meadow and a wood on either hand,
And I am inclined to agree.

THE DARK WOOD

In the dark of the wood, silence. No leaf stirred,
No sound, whisper of water or trill of bird—
When a voice said, a voice I had never heard,
“How is it with you?”

The evening light peered through the wood. I had come
A long way over, up the long hill I had come—
Now, half to myself, I answered, turning home,
“It is well with me.”

Silence. Silence over valley and hill.
Silence in the dark wood. The world was still.
But a music that I have heard was with me still
As I turned homeward.

BONAC

Du bist Orplid, mein Land, das ferne leuchtet
—Mörike

I

This is enchanted country, lies under a spell,
Bird-haunted, ocean-haunted—land of youth,
Land of first love, land of death also, perhaps,
And desired return. Sea-tang and honeysuckle
Perfume the air, where the old house looks out
Across mild lowlands, meadows of scrub and pine,
A shell echoing the sea's monotone
That haunts these shores. And here, all summer through,
From dawn to dusk, there will be other music,
Threading the sea's music: at rise of sun,
With jubilation half-awakened birds
Salute his coming again, the lord of life,
His ambulatory footstep over the earth,
Who draws after him all that tide of song—
Salute the oncoming day, while from the edges
Of darkness, westward, fading voices call,
Night's superseded voices, the whip-poor-will's
Lamentation and farewell. Morning and noon
And afternoon and evening, the singing of birds
Lies on this country like an incantation:
Robin and wren, catbird, phoebe and chat,
Song-sparrow's music-box tune, and from the slender
Arches of inmost shade, the woodland's roof,
Where few winds come, flutelike adagio or
Wild syrinx-cry and high raving of the thrush,
Their clang and piercing pierce the spirit through—

Look off into blue heaven, you shall witness
Angelic motions, the volt and sidewise shift
Of the swallow in mid-air. Enchanted land,
Where time has died; old ocean-haunted land;
Land of first love, where grape and honeysuckle
Tangle their vines, where the beach-plum in spring
Snows all the inland dunes; bird-haunted land,
Where youth still dwells forever, your long day
Draws to its close, bringing for evening-star
Venus, a bud of fire in the pale west,
Bringing dusk and the whip-poor-will again,
And the owl's tremolo and the firefly,
And gradual darkness. Silently the bat,
Over still lawns that listen to the sea,
Weaves the preoccupation of his flight.
The arch of heaven soars upward with all its stars.

II

Summer fades soon here, autumn in this country
Comes early and exalted. Where the wild land,
With its sparse bayberry and huckleberry,
Slopes seaward, where the seaward dunes go down,
Echoing, to the sea; over the beaches,
Over the shore-line stretching east and west,
The ineffable slant light of autumn lingers.
The roof of heaven is higher now, the clouds
That drag, trailing, along the enormous vault
Hang higher, the wide ways are wider now.
Sea-hawks wander the ocean solitudes,
Sea-winds walk there, the waters grow turbulent,
And inland also a new restlessness
Walks the world, remembering something lost,

Seeking something remembered: wheeling wings
 And songless woods herald the great departure,
 Cattle stray, swallows gather in flocks,
 The cloud-travelling moon through gusty cloud
 Looks down on the first pilgrims going over,
 And hungers in the blood are whispering, "Flee!
 Seek elsewhere, here is no lasting home."
 Now bird-song fails us, now an older music
 Is vibrant in the land—the drowsy cry
 Of grasshopper and cricket, earth's low cry
 Of sleepy love, her inarticulate cry,
 Calling life downward, promising release
 From these vague longings, these immortal torments.
 The drowsy voice drones on—oh, siren voice:
 Aeons of night, millenniums of repose,
 Soundless oblivion, divine surcease,
 Dark intermingling with the primal darkness,
 Oh, not to be, to slough this separate being,
 Flow home at last! The alert spirit listens,
 Hearing, meanwhile, far off, along the coast,
 Rumors of the rhythm of some wakeful thing,
 Reverberations, oceanic tremors,
 The multitudinous motions of the sea,
 With all its waters, all its warring waves.

A PORTRAIT

Eyes like the morning's when the sun
Looks out upon a world new won;
Lips, gently parted, brave no less,
And firm, for all their gentleness,
Where love were proud to set his seal,
And hope sits laughing—strong to heal
And swift to save; a forehead wrought
For the high dream, the lonely thought,
To shelter them; and, over all,
The dark hair's shadowy coronal.

VALEDICTION

Glory of soundless heaven, wheel of stars
Round the bright axle-tree in silence turning!
Trellis and cloudy vine! Great labyrinth
And wilderness of light! Hear, you proud flames
Hung high forever, your cold Medusa stare
Has turned a heart to stone.

THE ABANDONED NESTLING

I wish I could have saved you, poor abandoned thing,
Poor nestling—all day I had heard you call and, passing by,
Saw, craned up out of the nest upon the swaying bough,
That beak, wide open, hideous, where life was clamoring
So fiercely—all day, all night, till now
Sounding its frantic cry.

Now there is silence. Among the voices of the coming
spring
Yours will be silent. What shall be said of you, who lie
Propped here so still in your nest upon the swaying bough?
Out of nothing there came a need, a mouth, a cry,
Out of peace, a suffering,
Drawn back into it now.

THE COMPASS

Put down your foot and you shall feel
What long was there before your birth,
The faithful ground beneath your heel,

The steadfast and enduring earth
That bears up all things, great or small,
Regardless of their weight or worth.

She draws them toward her if they fall,
She too is drawn, is falling, she
Serves the one law that governs all—

The truth, the prime necessity,
Which all the starry orbits prove,
Embracing which the worlds are free.

On earth below, in heaven above,
One truth; and in the world of men
One truth: the truth of man is love.

O voyagers on waste oceans, when,
Sunless and starless, without chart,
All signs fail you, take thought again,

Look for the compass in the heart—
That needle points true north—and know
The truth from which you may not part,

The course your vessel's wake must show,
Whose prow sheds, where the seas divide,
Great fans of foam, lighter than snow,

Wide wings of spray on either side,
Through solitudes unguessed before,
Waters and ways no keel has tried.

O steersman steering toward that shore
Beyond you still, steer on and lift
New lands up from the sea's blue floor.

Steer on where the great storm-clouds drift,
If the stars darken or they shine,
Steer on, though the wind hold or shift,

And on the far horizon-line
Bring up the world that is to be,
Love's holy-land for which you pine,

Searching the desert of the sea.

THE HOME-COMING

When he had closed the door
It was as if at last he had shut out
The darkness and the doubt;
Around his loneliness the little room
Strangely familiar grew, and all things were
As they had been before—
The poplar-leaves, pale in the outer gloom,
And from the meadowlands a cricket's chirr
Drowsily sweet, the moonlight on the floor.

In shame and sore disgrace,
And with much bitter wisdom he was come,
Sick for his boyhood's home:
The quietness was kind
As his own mother's face,
Bringing old happier hours there to mind
In nights of long ago—
From the worn shelf
Familiar books beckoned him, row on row,
And all things were unchanged, except himself.

Lone as a wanderer from alien lands,
Stricken he stood, and slowly was aware,
Even in his cold despair,
How the hard heart in him began to melt
And the good tears came blindly. There—
While suddenly he knelt,
But not in prayer—
Over his bowed and humbled head he felt
The ineffable silence yearn with hovering hands.

OUT OF A CLOUD

Suddenly the morning sun looks out at me
And I start up from sombre reverie,
The light of a god upon me from afar—
Pierced by great light, the glory of a star.
Out of a cloud, in kindness, suddenly
A god has looked at me.

AUBADE

O love, the little wood-doves call and call
Through this soft country, and the honeysuckle
Sends up its perfume to your window here,
But you sleep on. Wild rose and celandine
Wake for you in these meadows, from his elm
An oriole repeats his clear cadenza,
The thrushes sing of you, but you sleep on.
You do not hear them, though the far-off sea
Talks to herself and murmurs through your dream
Her endless love, you do not hear, who lie,
One arm over your breast, in careless sleep.

SYMPHONY: FIRST MOVEMENT

Faintly at first, and low,
The horns sing lamentation; answering cries
From flute and oboe weave obscure replies;
Through the forest of the spirit
Old fretful winds and murmurs breathe and blow;
Secrets we all inherit,
Sorrows, deep at the core of Being grounded,
Well up again, and flow;
The truce that bound it
Is torn away, Time's wound is bared anew.
Hear, O my spirit!
The violins begin their proud complaint
In the desert of the world.

EARTH THE MOTHER

When I went forth in the morning with all my gear,
In battle array, with proud banner flying,
The great mother who had sent me forth was there
To cheer me on. Her peepers in the marsh were crying
And it was the spring of the year.

When I came home in the evening, in darkness drear
And sorry array, with no proud banner flying,
The great mother who had sent me forth was there
To take me back. Now I am lying
At her heart in the spring of the year.

MOZART PERHAPS

Walking at night alone,
I heard, in a house on a dune along the shore,
The tinkle of a piano idly played—
Mozart perhaps, the music Man has made—
The little intricate tune
Spelled out its human pathos tenderly
Against the oceanic surge and roar,
The barbarous choiring of the wind and sea,
That here shall sound when Man is here no more,
His plaintive music gone—
While they rave on.

CIRCULAR SECRET

Leave starry heaven behind,
Enter the atom, shrink
Into the vast, and find
You stand upon the brink
Of starry heaven again—
There where you were you are,
Full circle come again
On a journey circular,
Through the atom back to the stars.

AFTERNOON:
AMAGANSETT BEACH

The broad beach,
Sea-wind and the sea's irregular rhythm,
Great dunes with their pale grass, and on the beach
Driftwood, tangle of bones, an occasional shell,
Now coarse, now carven and delicate—whorls of time
Stranded in space, deaf ears listening
To lost time, old oceanic secrets.
Along the water's edge, in pattern casual
As the pattern of the stars, the pin-point air-holes,
Left by the sand-flea under the receding spume,
Wink and blink out again. A gull drifts over,
Wide wings crucified against the sky—
His shadow travels the shore, upon its margins
You will find his signature: one long line,
Two shorter lines curving out from it, a nearly
Perfect graph of the bird himself in flight.
His footprint is his image fallen from heaven.

EPITAPH

Child, though the years divide us till the rust
Of time has tarnished memory, and you, too,
Seem but a voice from some forgotten shore,
It shall not be for long. O quiet dust,
Sleep unafraid, I journey on to you,
Though you, indeed, to me may come no more.

JULY AFTERNOON

All afternoon, drowsing here, I have heard,
In the west wood nearby,
A vireo's quick, reiterate, questioning call,
Like water, dripping, fall
Into the silence. No least wind has stirred,
Even with the softest sigh,
The little leaves to turn the other cheek,
Rough side or sleek.
Light is stiff in bush and tree,
Great light is over all.
Now there will be,
Deep in the tunnelled shade
And on the winding walks mossy with time,
Siftings of light on darkness laid.
The vireo's call measures the afternoon—
And high in the western heaven, see!
Clear as a chime,
The snow-pale moon.

ELEGY

Nec mea qui digitis lumina condat erit

The gnu up at the Zoo
Has closed his eyes in death,
He was a very patient gnu
Who never made too much to-do
Until he was out of breath.
Few there were understood him,
Very few understood him—
Now he is gone
I mourn alone
That most untimely death.

The ape who had no shape
Went over the hill today,
He always wanted to escape
Until he discovered a way—
And he closed his eyes
In sheer surprise
When he found he was dead, they say.
Many there are will mourn him,
Many who once did scorn him,
And some there are will pray.

I pray every day
For all things that draw breath—
For the ape and the gnu
Up at the Zoo,
For the turtle-dove and the tiger too,
I pray with every breath.

But chiefly for myself I pray,
And for the staring fish that may
Not close their eyes by night or day—
No, not even in death.

WOOD-THRUSH

Behind the wild-bird's throat
An Eden, more remote
Than Adam knew of, lies—
The primal paradise
Lost, yet forever here,
From that wild syrinx cries
Into the listening ear,
The labyrinthine heart,
A longing, a regret,
In which it has no part.
Where the young leaves are met
In overarching green
Soft winds stir and divide,
Where shadows cloud and throng
The coverts in between,
That early bud of song
Opens its petals wide,
Becomes a three-fold star
Of voices twined and blent,
Happy and innocent,
Within whose singing are
Troy lost and Hector slain,
Judas and Golgotha,
The longing and the pain,
Sorrows of old that were
And joy come back again
From ages earlier,
Before joy's course was run,
Before time's bounds were set—
The fountains of the sun

Are in that twining jet
Of song, so clear, so cool.
While the false heart raves on,
For longing, like a fool,
The quiet voice is gone:
The song, inept to save,
Happy and innocent,
Falls silent as the grave,
Closing the door upon
Those half-remembered things—
Only the silence sings
On, and forever on.

THE TWO SOCIETIES

"Come back at dead of night and speak to me,
You are too much a stranger here—
Come as you used to be,
And have no fear,
My very dear."
"Ah no, that may not be,
To come so near
Is not for you and me."

"Oh, tell me but one thing, for I must know
Or perish of the uncertainty—
Whisper it to me here,
That you are happy so
And we shall meet again." "Ah no,
My very dear.
I may not answer you,
Nor if I answered could you hear."

MEDITATION

I live in an old house on a dark star
In the wilderness of heaven. Through these rooms,
Where I so many a time have seen them pass,
Men and women, some of them my own blood,
Still move in memory—their absence here
Is like an echo, the whip-poor-will at twilight
Laments them and the little owls cry out
Their legendary names, whom I have cherished.
It is hard to understand. At night the sea,
That moves upon the bare bed of this star,
Turns in her sleep and tells me marvellous things,
How there is no beginning and no end
But all flows on forever. And other stars
Look out at me, the intolerable glory of heaven,
To which the ages have lifted hands in vain,
Stares down upon me from a thousand eyes
Its shining secret. Here upon my shelf,
In half-forgotten volumes, old and worn,
Spirits out of the past that once were men
And walked the earth, now shrunken to the measure
Of a head-hunter's trophy, row on row,
Like birds in covered cages, bide their time
To do my will when I shall bid them speak.

CHANTEY

To some far land,
Oh, far beyond this,
Far, far
Beyond all knowing—
The meadowy sea
On either hand,
With no fixed star
For guide, we are going
Far and free
Where a new world is.
The sail's up the mast,
The wind is blowing,
We are moving now—
At last, at last
Round the seaward prow
The waves are flowing.

The evening sun
On the sea looks out,
Soft in the sail
The sea-wind crying
Makes drowsy moan—
Now, one by one,
The headlands pale,
The light is dying.
The sea is lone,
In the dark about
No sound save
For the waters sighing,
As on we fare.

Oh, over the wave,
Somewhere, somewhere,
That land is lying.

We have left behind
Old hope and fear,
Love and its pain,
The heart's deep yearning—
Pleasure that palls,
The fretful mind,
And wisdom vain
After years of learning.
The far land calls,
Drawing near, drawing near!
The sea, the sea,
In the dawn-light burning,
Is flashing past—
We are fled, we are free,
Oh, at last, at last,
Beyond all returning.

HERRING-GULL

Run seaward, launch upon the air, and sound your desolate
cry

Over these shores and waters; the wind on which you
rest

Air-borne, as sea-borne on the ocean's undulant breast,
Buoys you on, hunting the waste with hungry eye.

Are there, beyond these crowded shores, beyond your call
And waiting your return to their sandy bed,
Young, ravenous beaks strained skyward, gaping to be
fed?

A need is on you, a great need is on us all.

Balance upon the wind, send out your desolate cry
To the four corners of the waste, your clamor is
The clamor of life in bondage to the old necessities—
Torment that is the thrust of some immortal joy.

MORNING DRAWS NEAR

Morning draws near. Already watery gleams
Seep through, diluting darkness; premonitions
Of dawn run on the air; imminent light
Wells fire along the horizon. Day is waking!
By shore and dune, in meadow, marsh and wood,
To the old torment, to the bloody task
And tragedy of being, to the delight,
The longing and the wonder, life is waking!
Faint pipings prick the dusk, preludes to joy
At the coming of the god; the robin first
With frenzied caroling gives thanks; the wren,
The oriole, chewink, flicker and chat
Sound jubilant assent; the thrushes last
With solemn chaunt antiphonal proclaim
Resurrection and return. Spirit is waking!
The spirit that sleeps in metal and in stone,
In flower and tree, in water, earth and air,
And in the spinning demons of the atom,
And in the stars, and in the beast in man,
Sleeps, but is growing restless and shall win
A way out of its prison. Hope is waking!
All time present and all time to come,
All time past—the past, which has been the future,
As the future shall be the past—all spirits living,
All spirits that were, all spirits yet to be,
In this brief moment, this eternal now,
Wait on that hope: we are all here together.

THE CRUEL SONG

Move with a dancing step to a sad music

In agonizing dance,
With fierce reluctant love,
To the measure of that song
In which they live and move,
In iron governance
All things are whirled along.
All things that live and are,
Breathless or drawing breath,
Atom and man and star,
Time's cycle and renewal,
Rhythms of birth and death,
Are dancing to that song,
Inflexible and cruel,
By the one music bound
Whose counterpoint is pain.
As the great song turns round
They turn, retreat, advance,
Follow the pattern through,
Retreat, advance again,
Longingly, loathingly,
As the music bids them do—
And all dance, dance,
In that great agony.

All living things, all flesh,
Earth's violent wills at war,
Striving with one another,
Dying, each of the other,

In the bloody web of things
Tangled, the carnal mesh,
In toils of the struggle bound
That each was fashioned for—
In lust and agony
Woven of one another
In the brute clash of things—
As the great song wheels round,
(The primal dissonance),
They tread the harsh measure through,
Do as they have to do;
And all dance, dance,
In that great agony.

The atom, a whirling storm,
Hushed fury of force
Locked on itself, the swarm
Of the stars in heaven, too,
Locked each in its course,
Straining against the tether,
By the one music bound,
To the one truth held true
That holds all things together
In iron bondage held
As the great song comes round;
In agony compelled,
Out of that agony
"God! God!" they cry,
"Joy! Joy!" they cry—
Oh, the joy is agony,

That agony is joy—
“Dance, dance,” they cry,
“Dance, dance for joy,
In the great agony!”

NIGHT THOUGHTS IN AGE

Light, that out of the west looked back once more
Through lids of cloud, has closed a sleepy eye;
The heaven of stars bends over me its silence,
A harp through which the wind of time still whispers
Music some hand has hushed but left there trembling—
Conceits of an aging man who lies awake
Under familiar rafters, in this leafy
Bird-singing, haunted, green, ancestral spot
Where time has made such music! For often now,
In this belovèd country whose coastal shores
Look seaward, without limit, to the south—
Land of flung spume and spray, sea-winds and -voices,
Where the gull rides the gale on equal wing,
With motionless body and downward-bending head,
Where, in mid-summer days, offshore, the dolphin
Hurdles the water with arching leap and plunge—
I meditate, lying awake, alone,
On the sea's voice and time's receding music,
Felt ebbing in the heart and shrunken vein—
How time, that takes us all, will at the last,
In taking us, take the whole world we are dreaming:
Sun, wind and sea, whisper of rain at night,
The young, hollow-cheeked moon, the clouds of evening
Drifting in a great solitude—all these
Shall time take away, surely, and the face
From which the eyes of love look out at us
In this brief world, this horror-haunted kingdom
Of beauty and of longing and of terror,
Of phantoms and illusion, of appearance
And disappearance—magic of leger-de-main,

Trick of the prestidigitator's wand—
The huge phantasmagoria we are dreaming:
This shall time take from us, and take forever,
When we are taken by that receding music.
O marvel of things, fabulous dream, too soon,
Too soon will the wild blood cry out and death
Quell, with one blow, the inscrutable fantasy!
Shall prayer change this? Youth is the hour for prayer,
That has so much to pray for; a man's life,
Lived howsoever, is a long reconciliation
To the high, lonely, unforgiving truth,
Which will not change for his or any prayer,
Now or hereafter: in that reconciliation
Lies all of wisdom. Age is the hour for praise,
Praise that is joy, praise that is acquiescence,
Praise that is adoration and gratitude
For all that has been given and not been given.
Night flows on. The wind, that all night through
Quickened the treetops with a breath of ocean,
Veers inland, falls away, and the sea's voice,
Learned in lost childhood, a remembered music,
By day or night, through love, through sleep, through
dream,
Still breathing its perpetual benediction,
Has dwindled to a sigh. By the west window,
In the soft dark the leaves of the sycamore
Stir gently, rustle, and are still, are listening
To a silence that is music. The old house
Is full of ghosts, dear ghosts on stair and landing,
Ghosts in chamber and hall; garden and walk
Are marvellous with ghosts, where so much love
Dwelt for a little while and made such music,

Before it too was taken by the tide
That takes us all, of time's receding music.
Oh, all is music! All has been turned to music!
All that is vanished has been turned to music!
And these familiar rafters, that have known
The child, the young man and the man, now shelter
The aging man who lies here, listening, listening—
All night, in a half dream, I have lain here listening.

RETURN INTO THE NIGHT

What shall a man do when he looks upon
His work, at close of day, discovering there
The little done, the much that is undone—
The little of any worth,
The much unworthy of the lifelong prayer
And labor that gave it birth—
A man unlearnèd, wilful, without scope,
Nursing one hope:
To render articulate the joy that sings
Within him, the deep joy
Behind the tragic mask of things—
Glory that he would share,
And trembles to impart.
Whom does he speak to—there is none to hear!
He speaks to his own heart.

The hour must come to return into the night,
To do the seemingly impossible—
Unself the self, surrender all,
Be as at first in the blackness of that night:
Seed-bed of all delight,
Darkness from which the white blossom draws its flowering
white,
Source of all light.
The fiery sword of fear and pain,
Turning this side and that to bar the way,
Once overcome, can harm no more.

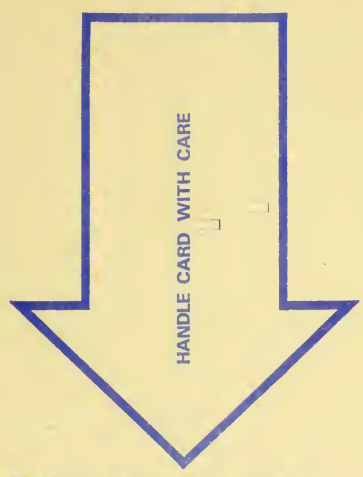
Time will have fallen away,
Terror have done its worst;
The agony passed,
We may return into our peace at last,
Be as we were before,
Till love summon us from the night again.





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